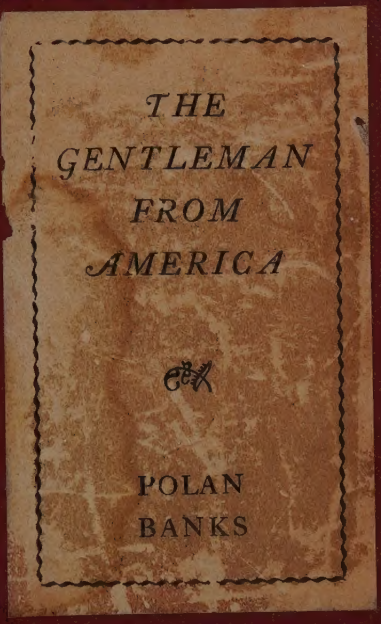
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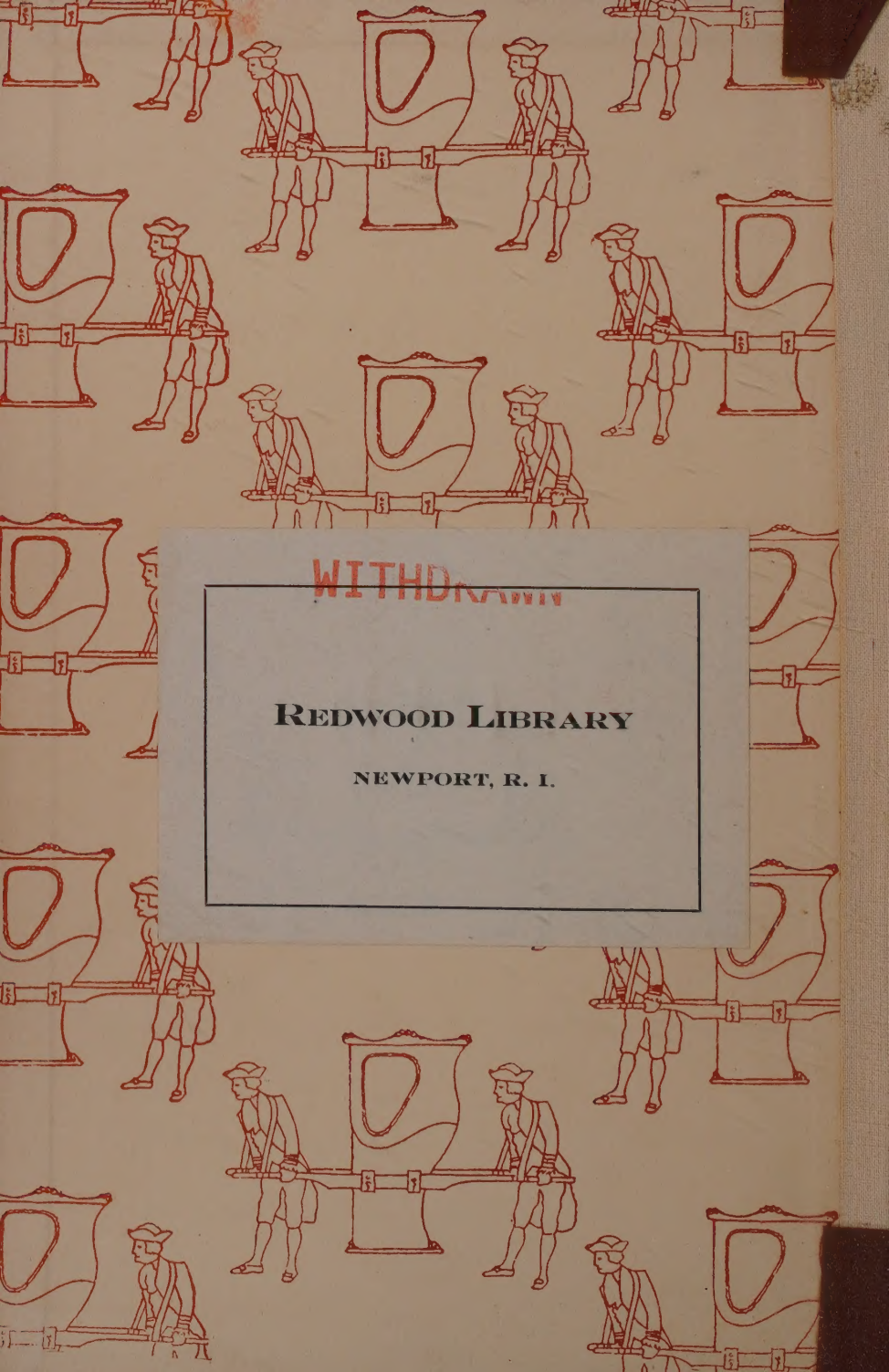

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by

POLAN BANKS

The Gentleman from America

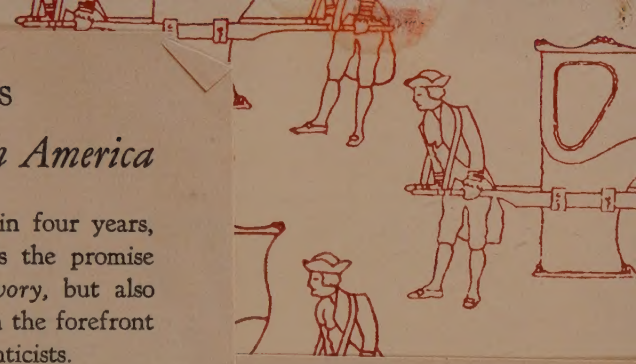
With this, his first novel in four years, Polan Banks not only fulfills the promise given in his earlier *Black Ivory*, but also takes an important position in the forefront of the ranks of modern Romanticists.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM AMERICA is young Temple Franklin—natural son of Benjamin Franklin's own natural son—and this is the story of his illicit romance with the beautiful Blanchette Caillot, who brought into the world the third of the illegitimate Franklins.

Mr. Banks also presents, for perhaps the first time in modern fiction, a full-length portrait of the greatest of Americans—not the smug, Quakerish *Poor Richard* of legend, but the sophisticated, woman-loving Franklin who wrote the famous *Advice to A Young Man* on the choice of a mistress and the long-suppressed *Speech of Polly Baker*, which are included here in unexpurgated form.

Here is adventure and drama, underlying a note of high romance, leading up to a climax which is as unexpected as it is inevitable—painted on the glamorous canvas

(*Continued on back flap*)



entleman from America

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and Versailles just prior to the evolution. Here also, in the Paris dering husbands and wandering meet in the flesh Paul Jones and , Mirabeau, Mesmer and Beau- "Franklin's Flirts," and a host of rical characters.

s re-creation of Temple Franklin hette Caillot, Polan Banks has om obscurity one of the most pairs of lovers in history. And rayal of the patriarchal Franklin ught to realize at the end of his seful life that he cannot help but rtache the penalty of the indis- his youth, the author brings that l of the American people to life w other writers have done.

sting on his strong sense of dramatic values, rich imaginative powers, and faithfulness to fact, in his earlier work, critics prophesied that when the young author of *Black Ivory* attained his literary maturity, his stature as a craftsman would become truly significant, particularly in the field of American historical fiction. The publication of THE GENTLEMAN FROM AMERICA is his literary coming-of-age.

Jacket design by G. T. HARTMANN

THE GENTLEMAN FROM AMERICA

Books by Polan Banks

BLACK IVORY

THE GENTLEMAN FROM AMERICA

THE BELLS OF CAPISTRANO
(*In Preparation*)

JONATHAN CAPE and HARRISON SMITH
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The Gentleman from America

By

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TO THE

HON. FLEM D. SAMPSON

GOVERNOR OF KENTUCKY

PREFATORY GESTURE

FOR the benefit of the historically-minded, it might be interesting to know that *The Gentleman From America* is based almost entirely on fact, its authenticity the result of long research both in America and abroad. The story of Temple Franklin's affairs with both Cunégonde Brillon and Blanchette Caillot are matters of history.

With the exception of the Marquis de St. Montaire, Signorina Yolanda, and their companions, all of the major characters herein are historical, as well as most of the minor ones. The major speeches of Franklin, particularly those on controversial subjects, are taken verbatim from his writings. Before judging that great internationalist too harshly, however — with reference to the indelicate portions of the texts of his famous *Advice To A Young Man* and *Speech of Polly Baker* (both included in this book in their unexpurgated form) — it must be remembered that he lived in the lusty, plain-spoken milieu of Smollett, Fielding, Rousseau and Casanova. The France that he knew was a pettycoat-dominated country which delighted in spicy stories spicily told, and where sex was a never-failing topic of interest in any circle. Too, the American Colonies of his day

were essentially English in character — a jovial, simple-living and simple-spoken society which loved fast horses, good liquor and pretty women, and made no bones of the fact. By the side of some of his other writings — particularly his remotely celebrated letter on Perfumes, addressed to the Royal Academy of Brussels (which is in the State Department Archives, in Washington) — his advice to a young man on the choice of a mistress, and the speech of the prostitute, Polly Baker, in her own defence, were comparatively anaemic.

The author would take this opportunity to express a heavy debt of gratitude to Monsieur Bernard Faÿ, of Paris, author of *Franklin: The Apostle of Modern Times* and perhaps the most competent living authority on Franklin and Frankliniana, for his invaluable assistance, and particularly for his kindness in giving the author access to the original Blanchette Caillot material. To Monsieur Faÿ, too, must go the credit for suggesting Temple Franklin as chief protagonist of this romance, rather than his celebrated grandfather.

Appreciation is also expressed by the author for the assistance given him by Mr. Norman Armour, *chargé-d'affaires* of the American Embassy in France, Mr. Burton Stevenson, of the American Library in Paris, Madame Marie de Mare and Mr. William Guggenheim, honorary president of the International Benjamin Franklin Society, of New York.

P. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER THE FIRST	
Introducing A Clock, And A Conference At The Café Procope	1
CHAPTER THE SECOND	
Including A Rainstorm, An Enchanted Sedan Chair, And The Romantic Tradition	19
CHAPTER THE THIRD	
In Which Is Presented A Quartette Of Portraits	49
CHAPTER THE FOURTH	
Concerning Certain Observations On The Unfair Sex, And Some Advice To A Young Man	63
CHAPTER THE FIFTH	
Of The Lady Of Moulin Joli, And The Stair Of A Hundred Steps	83
CHAPTER THE SIXTH	
Regarding A Sad Song By Candle-Light And A Pair Of Hands	104
CHAPTER THE SEVENTH	
Concerning A Catechism By Moonlight, And A Decision By Moon-Stroke	122

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

Of Our Lady Of Auteuil, And The House Of A Thousand Sofas 135

CHAPTER THE NINTH

Wherein Is Expounded Why, In The Spring, A Young Man's Fancy Turns To Thoughts Of An Amorous Nature 161

CHAPTER THE TENTH

A Chapter Of Kisses, And Daydreams By Night 179

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

In Which Is Witnessed An Ascension At Versailles, And A Decision At Passy 195

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

Concerning The Love Hunters — And Him Who Tiptoes In Boudoirs 218

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

Wherein Is Determined The Conclusion That Women Are Books, And Men Their Readers Be 233

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

How A Violin Moans, And A Kiss Is Completed 255

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

Of A Letter From London, And A Rendezvous At Nine 272

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

On Duelling And Dying, And Waiting For Dawn 296

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

Regarding Crossed Swords At Sunrise And The Lady Who Told 314

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

In Which A Little Girl Dies, And A Gentleman Returns Home 334

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

Concerning A Question, An Answer, And A Wedding Night 351

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

Of Magic-Making In General, And The Séance Of Signor Cagliostro In Particular 367

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST

Wherein A Friendship Turns Platonic And The Gods Begin To Laugh 390

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

On Sins Of The Fathers, And Sons Who Joust With Windmills 406

CHAPTER THE LAST

Of The End Of The Road, And The Magnificent Lie 434

CHAPTER THE FIRST

Introducing A Clock And A Conference At The Café Procope

WE STAND at the rail of the Pont Neuf, and watch the world and his mistress go by; we stand there listening to the songs of the Pont Neuf, and Le Ray de Chaumont insists on making epigrams on Paris.

"Paris," muses Le Ray, striking a pose, as he plays with his sword-tassel. "Paris. Hell for horses — purgatory for men — paradise for women!"

Paris, where fair women are ever fair game, and good hunting the rule, rather than the exception. . . . I could reel off a dozen epigrams on Paris, better than my friend Le Ray's, but I disdain to do so. It is much more interesting to watch the crowds thronging this Pont Neuf, the hub of Paris, and the centre, therefore, of all the civilized world. Besides, I am impatient . . . if there is anything more annoying than keeping someone waiting, it is to be kept waiting.

"What time is it?" I demand, querulously. "And where the devil is De Keralio?"

"There's a clock across the way," De Chaumont informs me, somewhat unnecessarily. "Even if you don't like my epigrams on Paris, you don't have to put on airs, Temple Franklin. Any man is entitled to at least one epigram on Paris. Paris is like that."

Which, perhaps is true; but I am more interested in looking at the clock.

2. If one should stand as we are standing, in the centre of the Pont Neuf, near Dupré's statue of Henri IV — one and a half times life size (as any Parisian can and will tell you if you give him the opportunity) and usually much more admired than the horse, which is somewhat too big for a charger (as the same Parisian gratuitously adds) — one can see, as well as hear, the chiming of the clock of La Samaritaine.

Just at the end of the bridge is La Samaritaine, very close to the Louvre; a three-story house built on piles, somewhat resembling an old, but very small, castle. In front of it is a fountain flanked by statues of the Christus and the Samaritan woman, as described in the Bible. The water is pumped into a shell-shaped basin, whence it falls into the fountain, which represents Jacob's Well. Above is a clock surmounted by a little gilt turret hung with bells. And if one happens to be loitering on the Pont Neuf at any time of the day, at the hour, or the half-hour, one can hear the thin, sweet chiming of those bells, even above the clamour of the busiest spot in all France. Rich man, poor man, great lady and courtesan — all pass at some moment of the day across the Pont Neuf. And all, it is likely, have heard at some time the chiming of the clock of La Samaritaine. It has a fascination for me, has that clock.

By day the chiming is subdued, and, perhaps, unnoticed; by night, more clear and unfettered, as if the melodious ghosts of the bells have ventured forth from their enchanted belfry to play hide and

seek among the shadows of the Louvre, or the ripples of black velvet outside the silver path of moonlight on the Seine. By day and by night, on the half hour and the hour, the bells of the clock of La Samaritaine punctually record the passing of the days and nights. And I like to think of the life of Paris, as keeping time to the tempo of that clock, like the tides responding to the dictum of the moon. I like to think of the life of Paris ebbing and flowing with the swinging of the pendulum of that clock.

Consider my Paris . . . and Mercier's.

Seven o'clock in the morning, and the gardeners appear, with their empty baskets astride their sleepy nags, en route to the gardens that feed the great city, of some six or seven hundred thousand souls. The coaches are not as yet in evidence at this early hour; only the clerks, dressed and curled and yawning mightily.

At nine the confectioners' boys may be seen, linen-jacketed and lazy, bearing coffee and syrups and rolls to furnished apartments — bachelor or otherwise. Young blades just learning to ride, followed by their grooms and avoided by foot-passengers, choose this hour. And last, but not least, the wig-makers — Provençals and Gascons for the most part — famed for their skilful fingers and wagging tongues; covered with powder from top to toe, and carrying a wig in one hand and a curling-tong in the other. Twelve hundred of these gentry, employing six thousand assistants, might be seen in the various *fau-*

bourgs, en route to their duties of powdering heads, curling ringlets and tapering toupees.

Ten o'clock, and a sable army of the minions of the Law converge, ant-like, upon the Chatelêt and the Palais, accompanied or followed by their clients — gowns flapping, brief-bags bulging with eloquence. And twenty thousand water-carriers beginning their daily round of buckets of Seine water — from the first floors to the seventh — six liards or two sous a load. And lucky to get it, madame, with the public fountains so few and illy kept!

Noon. The Bourse, thronged with stockbrokers and jobbers, the St. Honoré district with the bankers and financiers who live there, and the Palais Royal with the idlers, gentleman and beggar alike. This is the hour for presenting petitions and making demands.

At two may be seen the gentry who dine in town — their hair fresh dressed and powdered and curled — walking almost on their toes for fear of soiling their white stockings. This is the hour when the cabs are in greatest demand, and when, as often happens, two people enter a cab simultaneously from opposite doors, and both lay claim to the seat, a policeman has to be called in as judge, to decide who should keep it.

Three o'clock, and all the world is dining, and the streets are comparatively quiet.

Five, and the same streets are jammed and the din terrific, as carriages hurry to the promenades and the receptions, and the cafés begin to fill.

At seven, again the streets are quiet, save for the occasional stamping of horses' feet. In mid-winter this is the most unpleasant time of the day, for the watch has not yet come on duty, and criminals and foot-pads take advantage of the dusk to get in their best work.

Eight o'clock, and while the great ladies sit down to their dressing-tables, preparing for the Opera, already in full swing, the labourers and artisans return to their various *faubourgs* in noisy groups, the plaster from their shoes whitening the pavements behind them like the tracks of so many animals. Their day is ended, while that of the duchesses and countesses has only begun.

Nine, and the theatres pour out a fresh stream of traffic, as the fashionable world sets out to supper.

At eleven the idlers, poets and unemployed begin to stream out of the cafés, en route to their respective attics.

One o'clock in the morning, and the peasants — many thousands of them, come from as far as ten leagues, enter the city behind tired horses, bearing fresh vegetables, fruit and flowers. At seven, just when the bakers have appeared with their long rolls of bread, the peasants will be leaving the city again.

And so the twenty-four hours drag or rush by, according to the time of day or night. And each hour, and every half hour, the bells of the clock of La Samaritaine chime their message of watchfulness, each chime a heart-beat of the siren-city on the Seine.

3. "'Tis said that if you should stand here long enough, *mon ami,*" observes Le Ray, "you'd eventually see every soul you know, passing by." He glances with interest at the passing throng; women on high-heeled clogs carrying huge hampers, long-haired lawyers and short-haired priests, gentlemen with their hats under their arms and their swords by their sides . . . street-urchins selling news-sheets, and whistling the latest songs of the Pont Neuf, as they dodge in and out of the stream of coaches and sedan chairs. "*Ma foi!* — but I never see anyone I know — unless I do not want to see them!"

"I only want to see De Keralio," I return.

"What time is it?" asks Le Ray, idly.

At that moment the clock of La Samaritaine chimes the half hour.

"Half-past four," impatiently. "And his note said to be here at quarter-past — at the latest!"

"I don't mind waiting, for one," says my friend, agreeably. "*Tiens!* Would you look at those ankles? That little sempstress there . . . why is it that all sempstresses have pretty ankles?"

"Have they?" I query, coldly.

"To listen to you," says Le Ray, in disgust, "one would think you were born a virgin!"

"I was," I retort, promptly. "Come, Le Ray — take your mind out of the gutter, and look for the Chevalier. I want to know why the devil De Keralio isn't here."

"De Keralio is here," puts in a new voice, laughingly, "laden with apologies of the most humblest.

But what's this about ankles — and virgins? Are there any more?"

We turn together, just as the young Chevalier de Keralio, putting his hat on his powdered head, shakes hands with both of us at once.

"Where in the name of all the Greek gods have you been?" I demand.

"Dodging my tailor," imperturbably, "not to mention my boot-maker. Both called at once, and I was rather hard put to it to escape through a rear alley. The *canaille* had the impudence to come to ask for their filthy money!" Then, glancing at his watch, seizes each of us by an arm. "*Ventre-saintgris!* I promised Ste. Olympe and La Neuville that we'd meet them at this very minute. *Allons!*"

"Where are they?" demands Le Ray. "At the Widow Laurent?"

"No. Procope's, luckily. I wouldn't put it beyond that pest of a tailor to look for me at Laurent's. So we'd better avoid the Rue Dauphine." Arm-in-arm we set off across the bridge, very brave as to brocaded waist-coats and fine lace at throat and wrists. The Chevalier turns to me. "Why isn't Le Veillard with you?"

"He's dining in Auteuil," I return, "where, incidentally, Grandfather thinks I'm spending the afternoon, instead of helping his secretary, Laire de la Motte. But when I got your note, of course —"

"How is Doctor Franklin?" De Keralio wants to know.

"Gouty," I tell him. "And not in the best of humours."

"*Monsieur le Ministre* is an old man," Le Ray defends him, "and works harder than he should, all of our friends say. He's nearly eighty, isn't he?"

"Yes," somewhat indifferently.

"Father says that he insisted on going out to Versailles, yesterday, to the regular Tuesday reception for the diplomatic corps," continues Le Ray. "The King was very kind, I understand, and said that he need not have come, under the circumstances. But he did, and stayed."

"Not only that," I add, "but after His Majesty's levee, Grandfather insisted on going on to Count d'Armanda's reception, as he does every week."

"Who's D'Armanda?" De Keralio asks.

"You know — the cross-eyed chap — whose ices are so famous; the best in Paris, in fact." The Chevalier nods and I continue. "The ladies, as always, took possession of him at once, and began feeding him ices. If there's anything he can't resist, it's a pretty woman — "

"Seems to run in the family," grins De Keralio, winking at De Chaumont.

"Women, yes — but ices, no!" I retort, intercepting the grin. "In any event, he ate too many ices, and today his gout — and his temper — are worse than ever. Only, of course, Dr. Franklin never displays his temper."

"Your grandfather is a wonder," comments the Chevalier, and Le Ray agrees by a nod. We rent our

Legation in the Hotel Valentinois from the De Chaumonts, and they admire Grandfather extravagantly.

"He is a great genius," puts in Le Ray, earnestly. "All France worships him, and little wonder. The Apostle of Liberty — the man who tamed the lightning in the sky — the sage of the Academies! Where have you ever heard or read of a man who was supreme in so many fields of endeavour? Diplomacy, political economy, authorship, science — "

"No one admires *le grand Franklin* more than I," interrupts De Keralio. "But what I envy him most, I must confess, is his success with the ladies."

"That merely shows his astuteness," says De Chaumont. "France is run by petticoats, and all the world knows it. Dr. Franklin is a great statesman, and he is wise — "

"With all due deference to your grandfather, Temple," from the Chevalier, "to Purgatory with his statesmanship! What I admire about Dr. Franklin, as I said before, is his way with the women. Why, I have seen him at receptions, surrounded by the most beautiful women in France. They sit on his knees, and pet and coddle him, before their husbands' very eyes — and he kisses their necks, where lesser men are not even privileged to kiss their hands! What is the secret of his magnetism, Temple?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to ask *Monsieur mon Gran'père* — " I murmur, for my thoughts are far away. "Perhaps he'll tell you. And perhaps not."

"*Ah, oui* —" grins Le Ray. "Perhaps not!"

We are in the Rue Fosses-Saint-Germain, and can already see the Café Procope down the street, just opposite the Comédie Française. It is a great rendezvous for dramatic and literary lights, this famous café founded in the last century by the Sicilian, Procope. A place where all the world comes to drink coffee and play chess, to coin witticisms and compose lampoons, and to hear the gossip of the Pont Neuf, or comment on the news of the Palais Royal, at which latter popular centre of the town the newspurveyors are wont to congregate under a particular tree known as the Tree of Cracow.

Besides Procope's there are three other celebrated literary cafés in Paris — the Widow Laurent, in the Rue Dauphine; Gradot's, on the Quai de l'École; and La Régence, among whose famous chess players Rousseau and Diderot were once apt to be found; just as the four friends, Molière, Racine, La Fontaine and Boileau used to foregather at the Tavern of the Mouton Blanc, before the cafés superseded the taverns and cabarets, leaving them to the townsfolk.

"This rendezvous," I ask, of a sudden, when we are not far from Procope's. — "What is it all about?"

"Wait until we join the others," says De Keralio. "You shall all be told at once."

"*Tiens!* A mystery!" exclaims Le Ray.

"*Mais non!* An adventure."

"Mystery and adventure are synonymous," I put

in, all interest. "If it's anything like the adventure we had last week at *Les Grands Danseurs du Roi,* in Vauxhall, you need not include me. Ever since the affair with the little milliner from Lyons, I've been trembling lest Grandfather find out, and cut off my allowance, as he threatened to do."

"From what I hear," said De Keralio, "*le grand Franklin* was not exactly an angel himself, when he was your age, *mon vieux!* Surely he will make allowances. . . ."

"They look differently at these things in America," said De Chaumont. "Even in England. The Anglo-Saxons, you know, are great hypocrites. . . ."

"Here's Procope's," I observe, and we enter. We reach the table we seek and exchange warm greetings with our two friends, the Chevalier de Ste. Olympe and the Chevalier de La Neuville, who are buried in copies of the *Gazette de Hollande* and the *Mercure de France.* A waiter bustles up with wine and liqueurs as they greet us, and we make ourselves comfortable.

"Now," says Le Ray, "for the mystery."

"For the adventure!" I put in, with interest.

"*Ah, oui!*" add De Ste. Olympe and De La Neuville simultaneously, as they lean forward.

De Keralio takes a long drink, puts down his glass, glances around to see that no one in particular is listening, and leans forward, resting his elbows on the table.

"Do you know Yolanda — Signorina Yolanda?"

"The Florentine songbird?" inquires Le Ray.

" I've heard her sing at the Colosseum. Marvellous voice! "

" Red hair, and bushels of it! " from myself.

" Eyes that are like a devil's, peering out of an angel's face! " puts in De Ste. Olympe, poetically.

" The most intriguing legs in Europe," mentions De La Neuville, confidentially.

" You all are apparently familiar with Yolanda," says the Chevalier, dryly, and rather taken aback. " But do any of you know the lady? "

There is a momentary silence.

" It's not our faults if we don't," I declare. " She's under the protection of the Marquis de St. Montaire. His coach is always waiting for her at the Colosseum." I am referring to the immense circular building at the western end of the Champs Élysées, north of the Avenue de Neuilly, where it is the fashion to bathe in an artificial lake, listen to Mlle. Lemaure and other celebrated singers of an evening, and where the gilded youth of Paris meet on the great entrance staircase, to make audible comment on the pretty women who pass. " No one I know has been able to get near her."

" A most selfish person, our marquis," says De Keralio, gravely, " to deprive us of the pleasure of her society, *n'est-ce-pas?* "

" Lamentable, indeed," agrees De Chaumont. " But what do you propose to do about it? "

" I propose to borrow the lady," continues the Chevalier. " Temporarily, at least; permanently, I hope."

"*À la* Beaumarchais?" I want to know, quizzically.

"Not exactly. Mlle. Menard caused poor Caron three months in prison, and the Duc de Chaulnes was banished for a year, in consequence of the duel they fought after our friend stole her from him, and carried her off to the Rue de Condé to give him inspiration to write another *Barber of Seville*. I have no taste either for exile or the Bastille."

"*Alors . . . ?*" he is prompted.

"*Alors!* Tonight, as I suppose you all know, the Comtesse de Barbezieux is giving a mask ball. Are you invited?"

There is a chorus of assents.

"*Bon!* Now then, my little cabbages, do you know who is going to be present?"

"The marquis?" suggests Le Ray.

"Yes. But not alone. Yolanda will be there, too."

"She is to sing?"

"*Mais, non!* She is to be a guest!"

"But it is impossible, that!" exclaims De Ste. Olympe. "The Comtesse most assuredly will not affront her guests by introducing into their midst this Italian singing wench!"

"She will be there without the Comtesse's knowledge!" says De Keralio, calmly. "Only the Marquis will know."

"*Nom de Dieu!* The man is mad!"

"He's infatuated, which is the same thing," agrees the Chevalier. "But he's rich, so it makes little difference how mad he is. And with his filthy

money he buys up every pretty filly in Paris before the rest of us can even kiss her hand. It's disgusting!"

"But even he daren't insult his hostess like that," I point out. "There's a limit, somewhere. Every house in Paris would be closed to him!"

"So it would," says the Chevalier. "But no one will know the difference, as he is the only one who knows of it — or so he thinks."

"How do you know about it?"

"Through a stroke of sheer luck. My man, Pierre, is sparking Yolanda's maid. She told him, last night, and this morning he told me. Which goes to prove, my children, that you must never trust a woman. One word from that wench might ruin a peer of France."

"Which means that you will ruin St. Montaire?" queries De La Neuville, with interest.

"Don't be absurd!" says De Keralio coldly. "However much I dislike the fellow, I am a gentleman." His eyes begin to twinkle. "But I am not too much of a gentleman not to steal her from him if I can."

"I begin to see the light," declares Le Ray. "You want our help, do you?"

"You anticipate me," admits the other. "I am planning to snatch her from under his nose, tonight."

"Why should we run the risk of incurring St. Montaire's enmity?" Le Ray wants to be informed. "He's powerful, whatever you may say —

and the girl is nothing to us. Or to you, I should imagine."

"You are right about her being nothing to me. And I suppose you all are thinking that, after I got her, if I did, she might not find me to her fancy, at all. That is true."

"Kidnapping is no light matter," says one.

"Listen to my proposition, before you plan my funeral, my croaking crows! I am planning a small party at my flat tonight — four girls from the Comédie Italienne and — Yolanda. She will be at liberty to choose from the five of us — or even six, if Le Veillard will be there. You see, unlike that most detestable Marquis, I am quite unselfish. But I have determined that someone must take her away, from him. The airs of the man nauseate me!"

"Fair enough," admits the Chevalier de Ste. Olympe. "But I take it that one man is to do the actual abducting, and the other four help. What is your plan?"

"It is very simple. I intend to bribe the men who carry her sedan chair, which, of course, will be waiting in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Barbezieux. When she enters, one of us will already be sitting within, behind the curtains, and as the door is closed upon her, the man upon whose lap she will so suddenly find herself will first gently gag her with a scarf, and, afterward, talk her into reason during the journey. She will be unable to escape his embrace, and even if she does succeed in crying out, the bearers will pretend not to hear. But somehow, I

doubt that she will. They say she is as sporting a wench as the next one. The idea should appeal to her, if attractively put."

"And what of the Marquis?"

"That's where the others come in. Two of them must detain him in conversation — pretending drunken persistence, if necessary — until her chair is out of sight. The other two will be outside to see that all goes off well, and misdirect pursuit, if he does suspect anything. I have thought it all out."

"If you'd put that much concentration on *reversi* or *lansquenet,* you'd be rich in a month!" I observe. "Whether you carry it out or not, it is a clever little plan."

"It can't fail!" declares De Keralio with enthusiasm. "Yolanda's maid has described her mistress's costume in detail, as well as the Marquis's, although we can identify him rightly enough by his slight limp. And Yolanda, of course, by her hair, if nothing else. If I know anything about women, she's too proud of it to disguise it, and St. Montaire will hardly object. If she was clever enough to persuade him to take her there, she can do anything else she pleases."

"As I see it," puts in De Chaumont, "the most amusing rôle is to be played by the man in the sedan chair, whether it turns out to be pleasant or unpleasant. I take it you want that for yourself."

"No," says De Keralio. "Not necessarily. My idea is for the five of us to dice for it. The lowest man wins the job — the others of us to be his assist-

ants in the manner I have named. We'll all have our innings at the little supper at my apartment, later."

There is a chorus of approval, and the waiter is summoned and sent for the dice.

"But what will St. Montaire do when he finds out?" I suggest, as we wait for the dice.

"He daren't do anything. If he does, people will find out, and he'll be the laughing-stock of Paris. As our friend Voltaire has said, somewhere — 'Ridicule kills in France.' That's not the kind of death he'll be wanting."

The dice arrive and we zestfully begin to take turns at casting, announcing our totals at each throw.

"Seven!" exclaims Le Ray.

"A pair of eights!" from De Keralio. "*Diable!*"

"Eleven!" cries De Ste. Olympe.

"Four!" I announce, slowly.

There is a general murmur, then all eyes turn to De La Neuville, as he casts, and De Keralio takes the words from his mouth.

"Another pair of eights!" he mourns. "Temple wins." Then slowly he refills his glass, and raises it. "Just my fortune, but perhaps not so bad, after all. Lucky in cards, unlucky in love. Perhaps I may yet be able to win her away from you, *mon ami,* when you bring her to our little supper. We all still have a chance."

I smile, quite elated by my luck. The adventure appeals to me.

"That may be truer than you think. The lady may not take too kindly to the man who treats her with

force, as I must necessarily do, for a time. She may hate me."

"Either hate you or love you — one or the other," comments De St. Olympe, with a laugh. "Anyway, here's luck to you, Temple." He raises his glass. "Let's drink the hero's health!"

Le Ray de Chaumont gives the toast, as the four glasses clink together across the table top, and again I smile a bit self-consciously.

"Le monsieur d'Amérique!"

It is a hilarious, yet at the same time, absurdly solemn moment. . . .

"Now for the details," announces De Keralio.

Five heads bend forward over the table.

And in such casual fashion, the adventure begins. . . .

CHAPTER THE SECOND

Including A Rainstorm, An Enchanted Sedan Chair, And The Romantic Tradition

SAY what we will, this is an orderly world in which we live — a world where amenities are amenities, and a sense of the fitness of things practically a necessity for anyone with a social conscience. Being what I am, therefore, I must give heed to that inner voice, and go through the proper forms; there is an etiquette about these things, and although, in truth, I detest all forms of etiquette, there is no denying that even the most primitive of us live our lives according to the folk-laws of our kind. So what must be, must be. And, however unwilling, one must conform.

All of which leads up to the fact that I would take this opportunity for an introduction. I have a good memory for faces, but a bad one for names, so perhaps it is just as well that you do not trouble yourselves to give your own. As for myself, I am William Temple Franklin, grandson and private secretary to Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Minister from the Thirteen United Colonies to the Court of France. There is little I can say in personal description, except the fact that I am some twenty-four years of age, rather tall, well-made, with dark eyes, a stubborn mouth, and the large, heavy Franklin chin, and high, sweeping Franklin forehead. Whatever else you might by some chance be interested to learn of me, you may, perhaps, by reading on in this,

my secret chronicle and very private apologia. That is your privilege, but by no means your obligation.

Introductions are awkward things, at best, but sometimes necessary. Only yesterday I copied out for Grandfather to give to a visitor another of his now-famous letters of introduction, which he gives to strangers going to America, who press him for such letters. It is a form letter which he uses sometimes in extreme cases, and its humour is not unapropos to my own predicament:

"To Whom It May Concern:

"The bearer of this, who is going to America, presses me to give him a letter of recommendation, though I know nothing of him, not even his name. This may seem extraordinary, but I assure you it is not uncommon here. Sometimes, indeed, one unknown person brings another equally unknown, to recommend him; and sometimes they recommend each other! As to this gentleman, I must refer you to himself for his character and merits, with which he is certainly better acquainted than I can possibly be. I recommend him, however, to those civilities, which every stranger, of whom one knows no harm, has a right to; and I request you will do him all the good offices, and show him all the favor, that, on further acquaintance, you shall find him to deserve. I have the honor to be,

"Your most humble obedient servant,

"B. Franklin."

Therefore, as in Grandfather Franklin's letter, I recommend myself — (since there is none other to recommend me!) — to *"those civilities, which every stranger, of whom one knows no harm, has a right to"* . . . and trust you will show me *"all the favor, that, on further acquaintance, you shall find"* me *"to deserve"!* Until you read my chronicle, I am, indubitably a stranger, and perhaps may remain so, even after you have read it.

It is very likely that you may find stretches of my tale boring and unprofitable; but life is like that. There are not, after all, as many high-lights in life as fictionists would have us believe. Life is made up of little things — prosaic, unexciting, unromantic things, for the most part — but when a big event happens along, it looms up on one's horizon proportionately, and perhaps that is just as well, for we appreciate the few crowded hours of our monotonous spans all the more. It is just as easy to get satiated on excitement as on boredom. Only there are comparatively few of us whose lives are sufficiently eventful to enable us to make that discovery.

My own life has been a crowded, almost tumultuous one, and it would be untrue to say that I have not enjoyed almost every moment of it. Partly, this is because I have lived and am living in peculiarly stirring times, when all the world has seemed topsy-turvy. More so, however, it has been because, through the years of association spent with my Grandfather, I have come to know intimately the

life of great capitals — the intrigue of glittering courts; the stimulation of the society of some of the greatest literary, scientific and artistic figures of our time; and the thrill of taking part in international affairs, even if only indirectly, and, thereby, helping to make history.

Although a provincial, I was educated in London, just as my young cousin Benny Bache — who is here in France with us — is even now being educated in Switzerland. As the grandson and companion of the most famous living American, I am, however, more cosmopolite than provincial, if the observation might be permitted me. Travel does things to one, undeniably, and propinquity with the men who are accomplishing the great achievements of our age, does more.

I have known, in my short career, many men and women — interesting men and fascinating women. The most interesting of them all, however, is indubitably my Grandfather Franklin — and I say this with an unprejudiced mind, for there is much truth in the old adage that familiarity breeds contempt . . . no man is a hero to a close relation. And, as undeniably, the most intriguing woman I have ever met, or shall meet — but there, I am giving away my tale! Suffice it to say that in these pages you shall meet — more intimately, I can safely say, than you are apt to meet anywhere else — the two people whom I have loved most in all the world, or ever am likely to love as well again. The two personalities who have changed the course of my life.

2. The true diary, the veritable record of a man's thoughts as well as of his unimportant doings, is a sacred thing, to be treated with the intimate privacies accorded to all sacred things. An expression of the inner self, for self-perusal, only, so that, at intervals in a man's life, he may call forth the aid of memory, and stare into the true mirror of his soul.

There is an inner life in every man — an endless stream of thought which flows on unceasingly from waking to sleeping, from birth to death. I act, speak, function, as all human beings have done since the creation of the species, and, simultaneously — a parallel activity to those acts, speeches and functions — my inner life goes on. It is an awareness, rather than a life, I think — yet a conscious awareness. Two personalities; one, the living, breathing, visible shell that is the body of William Temple Franklin — he known to some who dislike him, as Franklinet — the other, the formless personality that is within that shell, invisible, yet ever present — the William Temple Franklin that no one knows (or would care to know, mayhap) and faint vignettes of which break forth upon these pages of this, my apologia.

It is odd, the conflict between these two . . .

My outer, public self, that the world knows, may express a *gaucherie* at which my inner self will stand aghast. My outer self will lie the great and small lies of the social code, when my inner self knows that lies are unnecessary and absurdly futile. My outer self will express the personality of William

Temple Franklin as the world has fashioned that personality, and, in its blind indifference, thrust it upon me, while my inner self writhes in helpless revolt. Helpless to do anything but, on occasion, to express that revolt on these secret pages. . . .

I wonder if Grandfather, working on his autobiography, is undergoing the same experience, but inversely? Surely his inner self is not being revealed on those pages meant for the world as he knows his inner self truly to be! Some facets of his personality, some phases of his character, must gleam forth, for that is inevitable — but the real Benjamin Franklin, the man whom even I do not entirely comprehend, is, and ever will be, hidden behind that cryptic smile.

The Franklin of the lightning rod and the bifocal spectacles — of the peace treaties and the Poor Richard sayings — the man who was born, and struggled and loved and carved out a name in history through feats of patriotism and intellectual achievement, is there. But the man who had his supremely human moments — the man who begat my father out of wedlock, as well as my natural aunt, who is now John Foxcroft's wife — is hardly likely to be there. And the man whose natural son begat *me* out of wedlock, bringing the strain of his illegitimacy down even to the third generation — no, Grandfather Franklin the amorist will hardly ever be revealed to the world, by himself or anyone else. By me, least of all, God knows!

But enough of Grandfather. This, my chronicle, is mine.

And there is the affair of the sedan chair to be set down at the dictation of my inner self. What use a diary, if not to unburden one's mind?

3. It is more than a madcap adventure, that. Not so much in itself, I think, as in the consequences of that ridiculous undertaking, into which, in my youthful enthusiasm, I have allowed myself to be persuaded.

I enter the great drawing-room of the Hôtel de Barbezieux, with one mood paramount — a mood charged with gaiety, embryonic anticipation, incipient deviltry. I, Temple Franklin, of Paris, am about to plunge into an adventure which might excite the envy of the most *blasé* libertine I know. I, young Temple Franklin, am about to snatch the mistress of a peer of France from under his very nose — a nose not only aristocratic in texture, but with a reputation for hunting out pretty women. If successful, it will be an exploit which will ring through the cafés, salons and boudoirs of the town, stamping me as being worthy of the legend for gallantry which is already beginning to grow up about the name of Franklin, in this, a country which dotes on gallantry and thrives on legend.

I enter Madame de Barbezieux's *bal masqué* in these gay spirits, I repeat, and then I meet Madame Brillon. Meeting Madame Brillon, in a way, is an experience in itself, as Grandfather can testify only too well, and does, often and at length. But for me the meeting proves almost lethal to my mood. That

charming lady has paused only briefly enough to make solicitous inquiry for Grandfather's health, but the moment she takes to adjust her mask before entering the ballroom is enough to have its effect. At its end, I am no longer the dashing young man-about-Paris I fancy myself, but merely the provincial young Temple Franklin of Philadelphia, who happens to be in love with her daughter Cunégonde. And the anticipation and excitement is of a sudden gone out of me like the life from the wick of a snuffed candle.

Five minutes before, while awaiting the coming of De Keralio, I had been visualizing the charms of the delectable Yolanda, whom I have so often admired from afar at the Colosseum. Rehearsing, in imagination, the line I will take with Yolanda, in the privacy of the sedan chair, the well-turned speeches, the irresistible gallantries I will use to best effect. After all, be De Keralio as sophisticated as he please, not for nothing have I spent all these years with Grandfather, both in London and Paris, in the society of the wittiest and most fashionable circles in Europe!

Then, in all modesty do I say it, there is a deal to be said for heredity. And heredity being what it is, I think I can safely add that I have my share of the family technique. For it is a technique, this business of love-making — say what you will. And the French have that technique down to a fine point.

With my Gallic friends, the art of love is the art of life, and after all, though I am bred of a soberer,

more prurient tradition, I am inclined to favour their philosophy. Is not the love-experience, speaking in terms of emotion — (running the gamut as it does from supreme despair to supreme joy) — the most satisfying experience in life? We were created to love, and the best proof of that Divine purpose, is that we experience our most acute sufferings and ecstasies when in its toils. Ergo, to taste the realities of life, we must love. An immature conclusion, that, perhaps, yet my own.

However, attained to that philosophy, it is odd that, agreeing with the French theorem as I do, I should yet be so disconcerted by meeting the mother of the girl I intend some day to marry, just when on the threshold of a prospective amorous adventure. It must be my Anglo-Saxon heritage, this cowardly conscience; even more likely, the Puritanic background of the Franklins in Massachusetts.

A Frenchman, I am sure, could go adventuring into forbidden fields on the eve of his very wedding, and feel not at all conscious of a sense of bad form, much less a sense of wrong-doing. He has a mistress, as all the world knows, and usually takes it for granted that his wife has a lover. And is acquiescent, with the philosophy that what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Cosmopolite though I consider myself to be, I daresay I shall never quite be able to Gallicize myself to that extent. For I intend to be faithful to Cunégonde, once we are married.

Yet, is it sporting to be unfaithful to her, even now, I wonder, uneasily, as her mother passes on

into the *grand salon?* We are not betrothed, it is true, nor even does her family, nor Grandfather, know of our feelings toward each other. . . . For that matter, I have never asked her, in so many words, to marry me; we have seemed to have taken that climax of romance for granted. Such is the way of lovers.

I stand there waiting for the Chevalier de Keralio, and, in my guilt, begin to develop a decided distaste for the whole affair. Exactly why, I cannot say, and I try to analyse it. Other friends of my age in Paris are formally engaged to be married, and still have their little adventures on the sly. A few of them are even in love with their fiancées, or claim to be. Cunégonde is not yet my fiancée, yet I feel as if I were in the same relation to her. Can I really love her, if I let myself become so intrigued with this adventure, when we discussed it yesterday at the Café Procope? If I truly love her, and am not merely in love with her, is it possible that I could be interested in another woman?

I stand there near a giant vase, puzzling over the matter, trying to see it in its proper light. . . . I come to an interesting conclusion.

I love Cunégonde; I like her society, I want to marry her, I want her to be the mistress of my future establishment and my life. But, also, I want the society of other women, and, more important, I am physically attracted to other women. To women like this Titian-tressed Florentine, Yolanda, for instance. To any of a number of women with whom I have

either been successful, or unsuccessful, according to the law of chance that comes even into the subtler relations of men and women. Does Cunégonde attract me, in that sense, I ask myself? I think it over carefully. She does; the basis of all attractions between the sexes is, in the final analysis, physical. However, it is strange, I discover, that I have never thought of Cunégonde in that light, before. Somehow, one doesn't think of nice girls in those terms; not until after marriage, anyway. Until then, sex is the exclusive appurtenance of the other kind of woman.

I am relieved. I am in love with Cunégonde, after all; particularly as I find, after reflection, that if I permitted myself the thought, she has an attraction for me in that sense. The Yolandas are of another sort of clay. Yolanda and Cunégonde are of two separate spheres, being women. I, being a man, can mix in both spheres, and still retain my sense of proportion. Neither sphere infringes upon the other — each has its place in my life.

I have finally attained to a oneness with the French theorem, I feel. I am very pleased with myself, despite a faint sense of uneasiness that still lurks in the far dark corners of my mind. I suddenly catch sight of De Keralio and Le Ray de Chaumont approaching, and the uneasiness too, vanishes, leaving only a ghost.

4. The *bal masqué* of the Comtesse gives promise of being a very gay affair. Hardened party-goers

though the three of us are, we all admit that. And none should be able to judge the merit of an entertainment better than ourselves, for we are in the position of being connoisseurs, we three. Bachelors, as usual, being in eternal demand, we are asked everywhere; I, particularly, being the grandson of the most popular figure in Parisian society.

The Hôtel de Barbezieux, is much like most of the other great houses of Paris — particularly of the fine new quarter of the Faubourg St. Germain, which has superseded the austere quarter of the Marais, fashionable in the days of the fourteenth Louis. It is built in typically French architecture which is being copied so widely by the great nobles in Prussia, Russia, England, Denmark, Wurtemberg, Bavaria, Spain, Italy, or the Palatinate. The drawing-rooms are two stories high, the ballroom immense, the long galleries endless, and the staircases little short of gigantic. All the rooms join one another, the better for purposes of entertainment. The ceilings are delicately carved, and the walls and mantels lined with great mirrors, which reflect the moving figures and the magnificent crystal chandeliers a thousandfold.

It is a dazzling sight, this *bal masqué*. The beauty and originality of the costumes, the brilliance of the jewels, the elegance of the army of liveried lackeys! Everywhere are mirrors, and everywhere myriads of candles. Everywhere, above all, beautiful and charming women — the most beautiful and charming women in the world, it seems to me.

We wait for the arrival of the Marquis de St. Montaire and his Yolanda — the other two chevaliers of our group are on the watch for them, below — and the evening wears on. A string orchestra plays, while hundreds of couples go through the graceful evolutions of stately dances. I dance often, for I dance well, and love to dance; fortunately, for dancing is a very necessary qualification for a gentleman, in France — or anywhere else, for that matter. I had been taught dancing almost as early as I had been taught riding and fencing and behaviour in polite society; indeed, I had paid the celebrated Petit, the dancing master, twelve francs a lesson, for a month, after coming to Paris.

I dance, and exchange gossip with acquaintances, and flirt with fair unknowns, and as my enjoyment of the evening deepens, my anticipation of the adventure which is to crown it whettens, but still no Marquis and no Yolanda. Could he have changed his mind about bringing her, at the last minute? I begin to feel cheated.

Shortly before midnight, as I stand at a sideboard, sipping champagne, De Keralio, unmasked, approaches, his face registering an inner excitement. He takes me aside. Our quarry is here!

He points them out — the limping, hawk-nosed Marquis, and the girl in the Russian Court dress. It seems to me that I have seen its double, earlier in the evening, but when I say so to De Keralio, he assures me it was she. I look around carefully, and can see no other. My attention goes back to the girl

Yolanda, and my pulses beat faster. She is not tall, but is beautifully proportioned, the Moscovite dress setting off her rather voluptuous figure to full advantage; for she is a bit voluptuous in the full-blown Italian manner, I notice. I get a closer view, after awhile, and see that her mouth is wide and sensual, but well-cut, and her eyes are dark and bold and daring. I remember her lilting voice, the spark of fire in her stage presence. I am enchanted, and the intoxication of the music, the wine, and the well-bred spirit of carnival prevalent, mounts to my head, and I am again the debonair youth of the early evening — avid of adventure, and reckless of consequence. I am very careful to forget Cunégonde, to put out of my head all thought of Cunégonde, even when I chance to meet Madame Brillon on the floor twice again. It is easier, the forgetting Cunégonde, when I see how obviously my chums and fellow-conspirators envy me my rôle. For the first time, I am really sincerely glad that the dice were kind to me at the Café Procope!

The evening wears on, the tension of waiting tightens, and I begin to mentally curse De St. Montaire for still keeping her here. The fool! Doesn't he know that it will soon be time to unmask?

I lose sight of the two, and of a sudden De Keralio appears, and with him De Ste. Olympe. Yolanda is leaving!

While Le Ray and the Chevalier de La Neuville stay indoors to keep the Marquis from following Yolanda too soon, the two chevaliers accompany me outside, the three of us in our cloaks. Luckily,

De Keralio has ascertained in advance that De St. Montaire and his guest are not departing together, but that she is to leave in her chair, and he in his coach, to avoid suspicion. The arms on his coach-door are well known, and it is not impossible that the singer might be recognized. They will meet later, I assume, at her *appartement.* Perhaps . . .

It had been raining lightly when I arrived, but is raining very heavily, now, with a strong wind making the driving rain so unpleasant that few stay outdoors. This is quite lucky for our purpose; there are fewer to notice, and, in the darkness and downpour, there is less to see.

Coaches and chairs keep arriving and departing beneath the flare of flickering torches, under the great *porte-cochère,* at which point is much confusion. In the courtyard beyond, in which the carriages circle, to re-emerge, the private sedan chairs are lined in ghostly array, their bearers out of sight; as a matter of fact, these latter are gossiping and drinking in the servants' quarters, nearby, as they await their masters. Ever and anon a stentorian voice from the *porte-cochère* summons a protesting pair — muffled to the eyes against the storm — to their duty, as guests make early departures.

My two friends take me to Yolanda's chair (a gift of the Marquis, doubtless) where the two husky-looking bearers wait silently in the rain, their palms, as I know, already well smeared with gold. They open the door of the sedan chair as we approach, and De Keralio hastily motions me to seat

myself within. Luckily, it is an unusually large and commodious chair, well able to comfortably hold two people, if one sits upon the other's lap. The curtains are drawn, but it matters little, for the window-panes are obscured by the rain.

My heart beating a little more quickly than its wont, I settle myself within, spreading apart my legs, covering the whiteness of my face with my cloak, and making my arms, hands, and dress-sword as inconspicuous as possible. De Keralio, in the meanwhile, is giving last-minute instructions to the bearers.

"When Madame enters the chair, and seats herself, close and fasten the door quickly, and, before she has time to cry out, if she does, be off as if the devil were after you. But I have drilled you two in that, already . . . you know where to go, and what to do."

They mumbled acquiescence, and he sticks his head in the chair.

"Ten *louis d'or* to you, Temple, if you'll give up your place to me!"

"Not for sale!" I retort. And at the moment, youth being what it is, I would not sell my position for ten hundred golden *louis*. "I keep you to your bargain, *mon ami!*"

De Keralio swears softly, and laughs.

"I can't find it in my heart to blame you, young rooster! *Alors!* . . . Ste. Olympe and I will be at the steps to help the fair lady into her chair, hurry her off, and, if necessary, impede pursuit. The

rest is up to you. . . . But don't forget, *mon brave,* that we shall expect to find you both awaiting us at my rooms, with the girls from the *Comédie Italienne,* when we arrive!"

"Dead or alive, we'll be there!" I promise him. "Whether she stays, however, is another matter."

"*Bon!* We trust you — the four friends of your bosom," says the Chevalier, not altogether jokingly. "If you play us false, *Monsieur d'Amérique* —" He voices an unfinished threat, in burlesque, then bursts out laughing, in the rain. "I should like to see St. Montaire's face, in a few hours!"

We laugh together, in the rain, and shouts are heard across the court, as the lackeys at the *porte-cochère* call the names of the owners of chairs. At the call, several bearers come running out toward their chairs. De Keralio slams the door shut; as an unfamiliar name sounds.

"There is Madame's name! Hurry!"

The bearers spring between the poles, and as the two prospective accessories to kidnapping precede them hastily, they follow, perforce more slowly.

Peering through a crack of the curtain at my left, I see that we are at the door, in the midst of a confusion of departing guests, lackeys bearing torches, and arriving chairs. Several masked ladies, muffled in cloaks against the stormy night, stand with their escorts on the short, wide stairs of the mansion, waiting for their chairs. There is a little cluster at the top of the stair-case, too, but I have no eyes for these, for I see Yolanda almost at once on the bot-

tom step, quite alone. I recognize her immediately by the Russian Court costume; I can see the distinctive headdress and boots.

I drop the curtain quickly, covering my face, as the door is flung open, admitting a miniature gust of wind and rain. In the confusion, no one seems to think of glancing into the interior of the waiting chair, or so I imagine. The next instant the girl, her head bent to the storm, is hurrying across to the chair, holding her skirts as she runs. De Keralio and Ste. Olympe, gallantly coming to her assistance, in the absence of an escort, seat her, rather than let her seat herself, to the accompaniment of flowery, if hurried, speeches. Slamming the door shut in her face, they spring aside, bowing low, as the bearers, snatching up the poles, literally race away.

It is cleverly executed, and no one, it seems, notices anything unusual, for I hear no outcry.

We are alone, the two of us, in a tiny world in an upholstered box. A world being hurried along bodily through the dark, narrow, storm-swept streets of Paris.

Cunégonde is forgotten, quite. She is of an alien sphere. . . .

5. For the briefest instant — that infinitesmal interval between the sudden lurching forward of the chair, and the realization of her position, on Yolanda's part — I am vouchsafed the experience of a genuine thrill; the realization that I am living a rôle in the true romantic tradition. There is, in that fleet-

ing space of time, the sensation of her closeness, here in the veritable circle of my arms. Her closeness, and a faint, indescribable perfume that has never before entered into my experience. A perfume that I would not ordinarily associate with such as Yolanda; a perfume that is surely the life-blood of some transcendentally beautiful flower. A perfume which is hauntingly reminiscent of the delights of lost dreams — nebulous, formless, like the distilled sadness of a tear. All in that first instant of contact I receive that sensation of delighted wonder, that strange disintegrating reaction to the perfume. Can it be that this, too, is but one with the romantic tradition?

The door slams shut, the sedan chair is off into the rainy night, and my fair unknown is thrown, willy-nilly, into my arms. Her stifled cry of surprise fills our sealed little world; it is surprise, and not fear, I know, for I can read her mind as if it were an illumined manuscript . . . her first thought is that she has hurried into the wrong chair, by mistake. That she has been accidentally hurried into a sedan chair that was already occupied. Her natural reaction, automatic, almost, is to tap at the door-glass — to attempt to open the door, as she half turns her head. There is as yet no fear.

The bearers will not hear, of course. As a matter of fact, what with the wind and rain, they cannot hear. In our sedan chair, we two can be as snug as a bug in a rug. . . . She is lighter, slighter, than I had thought.

My arms encircle her, my hands on her slim wrists, as I suddenly laugh, a laugh of pure enjoyment. I am young, care-free, avid of adventure. This is Yolanda, an Italian singer, a girl of the theatre; a saucy, comely wench whom some few years of colourful life have taught how to take care of herself. This is zest, this is living. An exultation rushes to my head. I am a man of the world.

"Good evening, my dear!" There is amusement in my voice, sophisticated tolerance.

She gives a stifled cry, and attempts to get at the door, but I have her wrists in mine — the bird is caught. Instantly she goes limp, then stiffens, rigid, in my light embrace. If it were anyone but Yolanda, I should say she is momentarily paralysed with fear, but knowing her ilk, I take it that she is thinking, lightning-fast. No outraged modesty, here! Rather, a shrewd self-control, analysing her position. Knowing that she must be in the arms of someone in the Marquis's own strata; wondering what the discovery of her identity will mean to him — and to her.

"There is nothing to fear," I assure her, pleasantly, and, I hope, with appropriate poise. "You are perfectly safe, Madame. I am yours to command."

"Let me go!" says she, tensely.

"I am afraid that is inadvisable," I deplore.

"Let me out!" she demands, and I find icy anger in her tone, not fear. The little cat has spirit!

"Surely," I deprecate, "you cannot expect me to turn you out into such beastly weather as this, *chérie*.

It is far more comfortable inside the chair than out — you can see for yourself!"

She is silent for a moment, and when she speaks, there is indecision, a faint surprise, in her voice.

"Then lower the window, and give orders, Monsieur, that we return to the Hôtel de Barbezieux! There has been a ridiculous mistake!"

"Ridiculous, perhaps, but a blessed mistake, none the less, Madame, that gives me the pleasure of your company. Permit me, rather, to take you home."

"You are very kind, but it is impossible. Take me back at once, please!" Her French is excellent, I find — surprisingly so, for a foreigner — but her voice has some husky quality that gives it a pecuilar liquid charm. That, of course, must be her Italian heritage. Although, in the closeness of the chair, her voice is necessarily subdued and lower-pitched than usual, it does to my blood what her perfume has done to my senses. I am enchanted. She repeats — "At once, *s'il-vous-plait!*"

"Do you think that is wise?" I ask, lightly.

"Wise?" she echoes, in real surprise. "Is Monsieur mad — or — or —"

She hesitates, and again I read her thought.

"Drunk? I am beginning to believe so, myself. I am intoxicated with your companionship, Madame." I *am* drunk. Drunk with the faint perfume, and the husky voice, and the spirit of adventure. Drunk with the intimacy of a tiny world isolated from rain and night and humanity. "Just think: You and I, *chérie,* in a tiny world of our own. Two strangers — two

masques — thrown together by chance on a night when all the world is masquerading in stolen identities." I am resolved to humour her idea of mistaken sedan chairs, for a while. I am in fantastic mood. "Isn't it cozy, in here, out of that so-wet rain?"

"I should prefer that Monsieur let me out — I shall find my way back."

"The rain is very wet," I remind her.

"Monsieur is very insolent!" she reminds me, in turn. "Let me out at once, or Monsieur will regret it!"

I think of the Marquis, and laugh aloud. I cannot help it. And the madness of youth and adventure is on me.

"I shall regret it, without a doubt," I tell her, as I feel her stiffen in surprise at my laughter. Then I resolve to end the farce. "Your incognito is unnecessary, beautiful lady. I know you."

"You know me?" with real surprise.

"Could anyone fail to recognize beauty?" I ask, in my best French manner. Then decide to adopt new tactics. "Tell me, frankly, what do you see in him? He is old enough to be your father!"

She gasps.

"How dare you!"

"This is a night of masquerade — yet a night of truth. Be yourself, beautiful lady, and speak the truth. Why do you put up with him, when you could have half Paris — nay, *all* the most eligible men in Paris — at your feet?"

"Oh!" She gives a little exclamation, and is suddenly silent. I go on, half in earnest, half in fun. This Yolanda shall hear the truth, for once.

"You need not explain. It is the old story. He is rich, and he has bought you."

Again she gasps.

"This is — *insupportable!*" in a stifled voice.

"It is good for you, however," I tell her, blandly. "The truth, like medicine, may taste badly, but it is good for one. However, tell me this, my dear. He has bought your favours — but has he bought — your soul?"

"What do you mean?" slips out from her — inadvertently, I can swear.

"Do you love him?"

"*Mon Dieu — non!*" She catches herself, quickly. "How dare you ask me such questions? *Any* questions? Let me out, instantly!"

"You need a lover," I tell her, matter-of-factly, secretly amazed at my own tone of worldliness. "You most assuredly need a lover — a young man, by choice — someone who still has illusions about love and women and romance. Someone who will worship you, offer such adoration at the foot of the pedestal upon which he has enshrined you, as you have never known before!" I wax enthusiastic, forgetting that this Yolanda is the sort upon whom sentiments so elegantly expressed are doubtless wasted. At the moment, I am talking to hear myself talk, as it were; young men are like that. And it amuses me. "Someone, beautiful lady, to whom you

can really give the precious treasure that is your heart!"

"So that he may break it?" she asks — again, I am sure, despite herself. "Your advice is interesting, Monsieur, but equally insulting. Let me go at once, or I shall — scream for the Watch!"

Almost on the tail of her words, the sedan chair comes to a sudden halt — so sudden, indeed, that she is thrown against me in a manner most pleasant to myself. The next moment it is grounded, and I hear muffled voices from without, above the patter of the rain. As I pull aside a curtain, and try to peer, unsuccessfully, through the rain-misted pane, there are the sounds of an altercation, followed quickly by those of running footsteps.

The first thought that springs to my mind is that St. Montaire, eluding my friends, has pursued us, and come to the rescue of his inamorata. I hear rough voices.

"What is it?" whispers Yolanda, tensely.

"Your friends, the Watch, most likely," I retort, attempting a devil-may-careness I do not feel. In truth, I am somewhat discomfited. Whatever the outcome of my imminent encounter with the Marquis, I am likely to be the laughing-stock of Paris, myself, tomorrow, instead of him. The shoe is on the other foot . . . I am helpless — even unable to run, if I were so minded, which I am not. "At any rate, I have enjoyed having had at least this much of your company, Madame."

Before she can answer, the door of the sedan

chair is flung open, and across her shoulder I see, silhouetted darkly against the light of a lantern on the ground, several men. It is the lantern abandoned by one of the chair bearers, who have fled. The nearest of the newcomers comes close, and sticks his head in the chair. It is a large, ugly, bearded head. By the lantern light I also get a fleeting glimpse of the flash of a knife in his hand. Hardly have I taken in the little tableau, however, before he inserts his other hairy paw, and seizes my lady's wrist, which, incidentally, I have just released.

"Come out o' that, my fine lady, and give us some of those pretty rings on your fingers!"

Yolanda gives a cry of fear, as her wrist is roughly jerked forward, and she is pulled out into the rainy night. As I sit in the chair, amazed, I see the ruffian drag her clear of the chair-poles, and he and his two companions surround her. They think her alone, evidently.

It is not the Marquis, after all, but common thieves, and cut-throats, with which the nocturnal streets of Paris abound. A flood of relief, strangely, overwhelms me, but the next moment Yolanda screams, and a great fury takes possession of me.

Snatching up my sword, I unsheathe it and spring out of the chair in one movement. I evidently cry out, as I do so, for the nearer villain whirls about, in surprise, and, with an oath, sends his knife flying at me. It misses my head by an inch, burying itself in the top of the sedan chair, just as I lunge forward, and spit the brute like a wild ox.

He slides to the cobbles of the narrow street, and his two fellows, dropping the girl, spring in to the attack, one with a huge cudgel, the other with a knife. I drop back a step, on guard, as the cudgel whirls at me, and the second cut-throat attempts to get at my flank. As, with dry throat, I suddenly realize that whichever one I get, the other will surely get me, in turn, there is a second scream from the girl, and the sound of running feet down the street. Despite myself, I turn my head, and see bobbing lanterns.

The next moment the two robbers have faded away into the gloom like wraiths, and the Watch have arrived. I stand there, panting a little, looking down at the man I have run through. The point of my sword is bloody, and I think I have killed him. If so, it is the first man I have ever killed, and a curious feeling, hard to describe, comes over me. The thin blade pierced his body so easily! It was like running through a sack of meal. . . .

"Ah, Monsieur — we are just in time!" The Captain of the Watch. By the lantern-light he examines the body. "The dog got what he deserved! A clean thrust through the heart, Monsieur!" He turns, and gives my companion a curious look, as he bows low. "Did they get anything, Madame?"

She shakes her head.

"No . . . this — gentleman — took them by surprise, before they could snatch my rings from my fingers. He fell on them from behind."

The Captain shows surprise.

"Then this gentleman was not with you?" —

Again she shakes her head, and, in the lantern-light, there in the pouring rain, I see her eyes gleam through her mask.

"The gentleman is a stranger to me." She addresses me, directly. "To whom am I indebted for — this timely appearance, Monsieur?"

She is clever, this wench. Well, there is no harm in telling her. She will know later, anyway, if she should come with me. And if she should choose to denounce me to the Watch, 'tis best that I reveal my true identity.

I bow very low, there in the rain.

"William Temple Franklin, Madame — grandson and secretary to the American Minister — at your service!"

I distinctly see her start in surprise, but it is the Captain of the Watch who breaks in first.

"*Bon sang de la vie!* The grandson of *le grand Franklin!*" He salutes, with great respect. "Monsieur Franklin, it is a great honour. . . . I am only desolated that I was not here earlier to your rescue, to have made mince-meat of these *canaille!* Can I be of any further service — I, and my men? It is but for you to command!"

Before I can answer, my lady of the sedan chair speaks up.

"My bearers have run away. Will you have your men take me home, *Monsieur mon capitaine?*"

"Gladly, Madame. We will see you to your door, to make sure you are not annoyed again." He gives

a few sharp orders, and as Yolanda steps back into the sedan chair, two of his men step between the poles. He stands at the open door, expectantly, and she whispers something to him — an address I do not catch. I stand there, irresolute. What to do, now? How can I talk to her, as I wish to, with these others about?

"Monsieur Franklin?" She summons me forward, and I come up, bare-headed. "Thank you for your assistance." She extends a slim white hand. "Good night."

"Monsieur Franklin is not to accompany you home?" asks the Captain of the Watch, with round eyes. This is a poor reward for me, I can see him thinking.

"No," says my lady, coolly, and again I see the eyes gleam behind the mask, although the lips remain demure. "Monsieur Franklin has doubtless other engagements. Good night, Monsieur!" Again she extends her hand, and I must perforce take it, and kiss it, raging inwardly at the minx. So this is her revenge! By the sword of Washington, but one would think she were really a lady, the airs she puts on! This worthy captain, here, for one, thinks so. I should like to tell him the truth, but I am not that ridiculous. You are no fool, Yolanda. You have outwitted me tonight. But there are other nights . . . you intrigue me, saucy Florentine — and there shall be other nights, marquis or no marquis!

I kiss her hand, and again get that faint perfume that is so hauntingly reminiscent of something sad

and sweet and lost. Something utterly unlike the woman I have taken this Yolanda to be.

I straighten up, and look her in the eyes. She shall know that I know. I whisper, so that no one shall hear.

"We shall meet again, nevertheless."

She hesitates.

"A gentleman will not follow me home. I put you on your honour, Monsieur Franklin. . . ."

I bow acquiescence. Then smile boldly into her eyes.

"It is unnecessary — that. You see I know you — Yolanda."

A startled look comes into her eyes, and after a moment a strange little smile creeps over her lips.

"You have made a mistake, as I told you before, Monsieur. Nevertheless, I hold you to your word, and know that your grandfather's grandson will keep it. . . ."

I stare at her for what seems a long time, there in the rain, in the flickering lantern-light. I stare at her, suddenly struck with a horror, as a thousand little affirmations come to my mind. Even before she tells me, I know, and I stand there, before her, immobile outwardly, perhaps — but stripped, inwardly; Temple Franklin, of London and Paris, is gone, and Temple Franklin of Philadelphia — the young "gentleman from America" — is there in his stead . . . the Temple Franklin who is really in love with Cunégonde Brillon.

"You have made a slight mistake," repeats my

lady, faintly — emphasizing the adjective. "I am not — Yolanda." The way she says the name Yolanda is not unkindly, but there is something about it that irretrievably stamps Yolanda for what the real Yolanda really is.

6. I stand there in the narrow, dark street, looking down at the body of the robber, which two members of the Watch, whom the captain has left behind, are about to haul to one side.

I look down at my sword, the end of which is dark, even in the dripping rain. I have killed a man.

I look after the sedan chair, disappearing around the next corner, preceded by a pair of lanterns bobbing about like fire-flies. The enchanted sedan-chair.

I am angry. At the unknown lady, at the Watch — at myself, most of all. I feel humiliated, embarrassed, truly young.

This, then, is the romantic tradition!

CHAPTER THE THIRD

In Which Is Presented A Quartette Of Portraits

IT IS pleasant to live in Passy. More than that, superlatively pleasant to be in Passy in the Spring. For then the garden of the Hôtel Valentinois is alive with flowers, well shaded by fine old trees, and altogether a welcome retreat from the goings and comings of the American Legation in the *petit hôtel.* Cool and scented and shady it is. But all Passy is like that — a suburb of gardens and terraces, of cool woods and warm sunshine and the gleam of white statuary through distant vistas between the trees. Fine chateaux and villas there are here, the country seats in the city of a wealthy, conservative set of families. For, living in Passy, of course, is like living in the country with all the advantages of Paris close at hand.

They are at the foot of the garden near the river, the four of them; and two of them are discussing women and the ways of women — Beaumarchais and Paul Jones. They eternally discuss women, and the ways of women, these two. Paul says that there is nothing quite so intriguing as the subject of women and their ways, and Caron evidently agrees with him, for whenever they are together, they sooner or later settle on this many-faceted topic. Grandfather and Mirabeau, it is certain, are discussing the Cincinnati papers — that is what has brought the Comte from London. . . . I shall go

down there presently and give Dr. Franklin these letters from Laire de la Motte's desk, and I shall listen to our two friends tell each other all about women. When will they ever realize that the man has never been born — nor ever will be — who knows the true workings of a woman's mind?

It is Spring — the eighth Paris spring we have known, Grandfather Franklin and I, since coming to France. And each Paris Spring has been an ever new, an ever unexpected delight; each year the sky seems infinitely bluer, the foliage more green, the very air more tonic. I stand there, looking at the sky, and at the placid blue Seine skirting the foot of the garden, and I smell the smell of flowers and trees and Spring, and smile, for no reason at all, unless it be because it is Spring, and it is good to be alive when it is Spring in Paris. Alive, and in love.

There has been an almost uninterrupted stream of visitors to the chancelry of the Legation today; the usual lot — tourists, erstwhile American prisoners, impecunious poets, Masons in search of situations, people for letters of introduction, monks who have lost money gambling, business agents, cranks, couriers with letters, and footmen with invitations — an indiscriminate, heterogeneous horde, all come to pester the American Minister. Usually Grandfather sees as many of these as possible, but today he has a touch of the gout, and so he is resting in the garden, receiving his friends. Champagne, the butler, has been serving wine; Xeres, most likely. Grandfather is fond of Spanish wines.

As I approach the group, I learn, as I have guessed, that Grandfather and Mirabeau are in reality discussing the latter's "Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus." And Caron de Beaumarchais and the Commodore are discussing women. . . .

I approach Dr. Franklin with the letters.

2. His gouty foot resting on a stool, my progenitor once removed is leaning on a gold-headed cane — the one given him by the Comtesse de Forbach, Duchesse *douairière* de Deux Ponts. (She is very old, now, but still retains some of her earlier beauty and vivacity of the days when she had been a dancer, and she is a member in good standing of that legion of ladies which Paris has dubbed "Franklin's Flirts.")

As I politely wait for Mirabeau to wind up his peroration, I take note of Grandfather, not without a little anxiety, for he has been ailing the past winter, and is, after all, nearly eighty years old. Studying him, I seem to see him for the first time.

He is wearied, Dr. Franklin — that is plain to see. He is round-shouldered and corpulent, his locks are grey-white, and there are many wrinkles at the corners of his shrewd, kindly eyes. His face, as ever, wears a dignified but tired expression. He seldom laughs, does Grandfather Franklin, but smiles instead his cryptic, omniscient smile. But when he tells droll stories — and they are often rather broad, even for this modern era of broadness we live in — it is in his old, inimitable manner.

He is tired, at eighty, is Grandfather. You can tell it by his eyes, for when you look at them you recognize them instinctively as eyes which have witnessed and digested many, many things. Tired eyes, now, but still holding a touch of humour. Eyes which have registered pleasure and triumph in their day, as no one knows better than myself; but eyes, too, which have vignetted secret bitternesses and distilled sorrows. And no one knows *that* better than myself. . . . Someone has said that the eyes are the windows of the soul. If that is true, then, like the windows of all great habitations, Grandfather's are discreet, hinting of everything but revealing nothing.

Still active, still keen of intellect and sharp of wit is Franklin, but tired. In his bones is the weariness of a titanic struggle, the reaction of the birth-pangs of a nation. Seven years of intrigue and hard work, of wheedling money from France, and fighting the propaganda of England — of establishing good will for our infant republic and immortality for himself. Seven years of worry and yet gratification, of dark days and shining nights; of contumely from his fellow-countrymen, often enough, and almost deification from the rest of the world. Seven crowded, hectic, glorious years — years of tension and nervous strain — and he an old man, this most famous of living Americans. Thinking of him in this strain, I realize that I am very proud of my Grandfather Franklin, despite the antagonism that crops up between us ever so often.

It is a full life he leads. Every Tuesday he goes to Court at Versailles, with the rest of the Diplomatic Corps, chats with Louis Seize and Marie-Antoinette, dines with his friend Vergennes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, goes to Count d'Armanda's salon, to eat that cross-eyed gentleman's famous ices, and be lionized by the ladies, and, having eaten well, if not wisely, returns to Passy, foot-sore. Grandfather loves the pleasures of the table.

Nor are Court obligations all. There are the meetings of the Academy of Science, the Philanthropic Society, the Royal Society of Medicine, the Assembly of Scholars and Artists at Hotel Villayer, Rue St. André des Arcs, and his Masonic Lodge, the Nine Sisters. Grandfather Franklin, like President Washington, the King of France, and most of the notables of the civilized world, is a good Mason, as am I, myself.

Every evening but Sunday — when we hold open house at the Legation for the Americans in Paris — we dine out. And almost daily is he the central figure at one of the best salons, where the women of all ages sit on the arms of his chair, or even upon his knees, and call him " Papa." The women all adore Franklin, and he smilingly accepts their admiration and caresses — too clever to misrate them, but not too old to appreciate them. He is nearly eighty, is Dr. Franklin, but not too old to enjoy kissing the ladies' necks, even to their husband's faces. Not that the latter mind; they feel flattered, on the contrary.

There is the opera and the theatre, garden fêtes and royal balls, a world through which he moves, my grandfather, majestic, benignant and beloved. But most of all he likes to stay at home in Passy, with his experimenting and his correspondence, with his printing press, and his visits to Madame Brillon. This is home.

Here we have our own salon — perhaps the most brilliant of them all, for to Passy come the ambassadors of Russia, Prussia, Sweden, Denmark and Portugal, to negotiate commercial treaties with our country. Here the Pope has sent his Nuncio to discuss the organization of the American Catholics, and here has been born the hierarchical beginnings of the Baltimore diocese. Here have come Romilly and Greuze, to paint Grandfather, and Prince Henry of Prussia and the King of Sweden, the Duke of Dorset and the Bishop of Bordeaux. Fragonard, Van Loo, and Duplessis; Steinsky, the learned Czech, and Filiangieri, the Italian. His friends, notably Du Pont de Nemours, Lord Fitzmaurice, and Vergennes, and an unending stream of visitors — famous and obscure — from all corners of Europe.

The Passy that he likes best, however, is the Passy that is his alone. When free of the gout, or the insidious attacks of gall-stones, he takes long walks, visiting neighbours or rambling in the Bois de Boulogne, or in Bagatelle, the Comte d'Artois's new estate. Sometimes I walk with him. When my young cousin Benny Bache is home from school, he sometimes swims with him in the Seine — he is an excel-

lent swimmer, despite his girth. Of late, however, he has given up swimming as too strenuous, and takes sun- and air-baths in his room. The amount of time he finds for his innumerable interests, friendships, and activities is amazing, even to me, who know him so well.

3. It is high time that I go on with my chronicle of the affair of the sedan chair, and Cunégonde Brillon, and the Stair of a Hundred Steps, but it is meet that I add a word or two about Grandfather Franklin's three visitors, for they are important men, these three — and any slight comment on those amazing personalities is infinitely more interesting, I know, than any I might make on my Cunégonde, or my mystery lady, or even myself. For they are amazing personalities, each in his own way.

There has been a time when I have driven in with Grandfather to the Comédie Italienne, from Passy, and we have stopped to call on his friend the Marquis de Mirabeau, the *Friend of Man,* from whose house, built like a rotunda, in the Rue Caumartin, one can watch the walls of the Madeleine creeping up, foot by foot.

Of late years, however, young Comte Honoré-Gabriel de Mirabeau — whom some facetiously term the *Friend of Women,* as a jesting contrast to his father's title — has gradually usurped his parent's place in Grandfather's interest. For the two have much in common. There is this affair of the Pamphlet on the Cincinnati, for instance. This is

said to be the first real attack of any note on the principle of heredity, and will doubtless prove sensational. Dr. Franklin is interested, for one thing, because he has himself written much ridiculing ancestor-worship, and, secondly, because he is warmly opposed to the recently formed society of patriot veterans of the American Revolution known as the Order of Cincinnatus, on the grounds that it is undemocratic. He has given Mirabeau much material for his pamphlet, and gave him money to go to England, where he wrote it, as well as letters to publishers.

Mirabeau's affairs of late have been in a most interesting state. He has spent a long period in the prison of Vincennes for having eloped with his neighbour's wife, and recently freed, has gone through several law-suits, become separated from his own wife, and had become virtually a pauper when Grandfather came to his assistance.

As if this were not enough, he had taken it into his head to fall in love with the exquisitely beautiful Madame de Nehra, and she with him. So when he went to London to write his pamphlet, and met Shelbourne, Price and Priestley, he took her with him. Now they are back, as he has brought the pamphlet to Grandfather to read before it is published. They understand each other perfectly, do Mirabeau and my grandfather, notwithstanding their contrasting temperaments. This much, though, do they have in common. They both have an appreciation of pretty women.

4. Caron de Beaumarchais. He who has written *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro.*

Caron is a dramatist, musician, song-writer, courtier, financier, manufacturer, ship-owner, secret agent, man-about-Paris, and what-not. He has traded all over the globe, has made and lost several fortunes, has had at one time as many as forty-odd vessels of his own afloat, and even lent his private man-of-war to the French Government at the battle of Grenada! Like Voltaire, the Comte de Ferney — who was not only a literarian, a dramatist, a reformer, and a philosopher, but was also a shipowner, contractor, and millionaire — Beaumarchais is one of the cleverest business men in France.

Caron has long been an intimate at our house at Passy. One of our most valuable allies at Court during the stirring days of the Revolution, he argued the King into lending us money for the Colonies, visited London repeatedly as a secret agent, and established the business house of Roderique Hortalez and Company, at his residence in the Rue Vieille du Temple, the famous Hôtel des Ambassadeurs de Hollande; using this company as a blind, since it was actually financed by the French and Spanish governments, he sent millions of francs worth of arms and supplies to our rebel compatriots in America.

All through those trying days Caron was ever at Grandfather's side, and on the darkest day of all — how shall I ever forget that day? It was the day that the Americans in Paris had learned that Howe had taken Philadelphia. The other American commis-

sioners — Dean, Izard, and both Lees — were here, as well as Beaumarchais and others, and we were all in the deepest gloom. At any moment we might learn that the Revolution had collapsed, and that we had neither flag nor country; that we must spend the rest of our lives in France dependent on the royal bounty, or go back to America or England only to be hung as ringleaders of the rebels.

Caron was here that fateful day, as anxious, good fellow, as ourselves, when Jonathan Austin of Massachusetts arrived on a sweating horse, just landed from America. I shall never forget Grandfather's voice when he asked Austin if it were true that Philadelphia were taken. Austin nodded, and Grandfather, aging perceptibly, was about to stumble back into the house, crushed, when the newcomer added the magnificent news that brought us to our feet, cheering . . . the news that General Burgoyne and his whole army had been defeated and taken prisoner! Grandfather lost ten years in that instant, and Caron, drunk with joy, raced his carriage back to Paris to break the news, driving so fast that he fell out and dislocated his arm!

Like Mirabeau, Caron has had his love-affairs. As who has not, in this gay, emotional woman-dominated country? The most amusing has been an actress, Mademoiselle Menard, who was under the "protection" of the Duc de Chaulnes, until Beaumarchais stole her away from under his very nose, and took her off to live with him in his house, then in the Rue de Conde. Taking her from the Comédie

Italienne, he elevated her overnight to the Comédie Française, which was more than a mere *duc* could do!

Not that the Duc gave in so easily. The two men fought a duel over her, which delighted Paris, but so angered the King that De Chaulnes was banished from France for a year, and Beaumarchais sent to prison for three months. The capricious Menard, the cause of it all, returned to a convent, where, they say, she tried to get a certain young priest to convert her to holiness, but he soon gave it up in despair.

5. As I stand there with the letters in my hand, waiting to get Grandfather's attention, I listen to an anecdote Paul Jones is telling Caron, concerning two of his favourite lieutenants, Mayrant and Potter.

While cruising off the Spanish coast in the *Alliance,* he recalls, they had put in for victuals at Corunna, where he and his crew were greeted as heroes. While Jones, himself, was dining with the Governor, Mayrant and Potter were found by the town police with two attractive young nuns in a cottage near their convent. The two young officers were immediately clapped into the *calaboza,* while the nuns faced an indignant mother superior.

The Governor, it seemed, was highly incensed, but the Commodore asked that he might punish his own officers. With the Spanish officials as witnesses, he courtmartialed the philandering Mayrant and Potter, deprived them of their rank, and threw them

into the brig. The next day, after sailing, he released them, and restored them to their rank on the grounds that "the punishment was inadequate to the offense."

Beaumarchais roars with laughter, and I join in, despite myself.

He is a swashbuckling, madcap sentimentalist, our Commodore, and the most romantic egotist of them all. Grandfather is very proud of him, and John Paul Jones regards himself as Dr. Franklin's foster-son, and my foster-brother. When the French gave him the *Duras,* through the influence of his royal friend the young Duchesse de Chartres — whose husband the Duc, is Grand Master of all the Masonic Lodges in France — Paul re-named it the *Bonhomme Richard* (the French version of "Poor Richard"), in compliment to Grandfather. Incidentally, Paul never tires of telling how the American seamen on the *Bonhomme Richard,* sighting the *Serapis* on the eve of their historic engagement, could not correctly pronounce the name of the Egyptian goddess, and dubbed it the Sea Raper!

He is a most elegant person, our Paul. He wears his dark hair in crisp, powdered rolls over his ears, in imitation of the impeccable young Lafayette, for whom I confess both Paul and myself have an extravagant admiration. He has a cornered hat, cocked with a rosette, and with a white and fluted edging. The facings of his navy-blue coat, fastidiously cut, are buff, edged with scarlet, and he wears heavy gold epaulets, the effect of which he likes so much that he

has sent home a duplicate pair to General Washington.

Bold, conquering, and lady-loving is our Commodore, and he has had innumerable affairs — even with the royal young Duchesse de Chartres, if gossip be true. Evidently his taste runs to Bourbons, for his one great love, the beautiful Aimée de Tellison of the red-gold hair, is a natural daughter of Louis the Well-Beloved, by a Madame Bonneval, who later married an official named Tellison. Paul's liaison with his Aimée has been an open secret these many years, as is the parentage of her little son, to whom he refers as his godson. Although she nominally lives with their great friend, the Marquise de Marsan, all know that she shares his little house in the Rue Vivienne. They are madly in love with each other, and their love is the admiration of all Paris. There are some who say, of course, that there was a secret marriage between them, sponsored by her kinswoman and former rival, the Duchesse, in the latter's chapel of Our Lady of Loretto. The real story is intriguing enough . . . perhaps I shall tell it, later. But I must get on to my own story, and Grandfather's.

6. I stand waiting, with my letters, and the spectator within me thinks his own thoughts. . . .

"Paul Jones and his Aimée; Mirabeau and his de Nehra; Caron and his Menard. Even Grandfather and his Brillons and Helvétiuses and other of his "Flirts." Four men — and such men! — utterly dif-

ferent, yet so inexorably alike. . . . How necessary a woman is to each of them — either physically or mentally! How lost they would be without their Aimées, de Nehras, Menards, and Brillon-Helvétiuses . . . ! " comments the spectator that is within me.

I smile at the whimsy, and the smile dies a-borning. . . .

" There is Cunégonde," continues the spectator within my lesser self. " There is *my* need for woman — for love. There is my need for Cunégonde."

Mirabeau is finished.

I place the letters on Grandfather's lap.

" The post is in, sir. These letters seem most likely to interest you."

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Concerning Certain Observations On The Unfair Sex And Some Advice To A Young Man

AND what is this I hear about your coming to the rescue of a lady in distress, Temple?" Paul Jones wants to know. "There's a spicy story in that adventure, 'pon my oath!"

I do not answer at once, naturally, for I had not thought the matter had been bruited about. Grandfather Franklin looks up in some surprise from the letters.

"What adventure is this, Commodore?"

"Nothing worthy of mention, sir," I put in, hurriedly. In truth, I have been rather ashamed of the whole affair, not because of the ridiculous mistake made by the Chevalier de Keralio and Le Ray de Chaumont, or the odd miscarriage of their little plot, but because of the figure I indubitably cut with the masked lady. For all I know, I might have been making those impertinent remarks to a princess of the blood! In any event, though hardly a princess, certainly to someone who knew Grandfather, for anyone in Paris who is anybody knows the American Minister. Rather stupidly I repeat: "Nothing at all, Grandfather."

They are all looking at me with great interest, and for once I am not complimented by such close attention; Grandfather, who has put on his square-lensed spectacles — Caron de Beaumarchais, mischief in his ever-restless eyes — Mirabeau, with his intelli-

gent lion's face — the almost foppish John Paul Jones with his hair in powdered rolls like Lafayette's. . . .

"Nothing indeed!" interjects Caron, grinning. "Merely a matter of running through a dog of a cutthroat, and putting to flight an army of the canaille before the Watch came. They say the gutters ran blood, Temple. My felicitations!"

"A slight exaggeration," I inform him, bowing, and hoping to carry it off. "It was raining cats and dogs. If there were any blood let, the water washed it well away!"

"You joke, but this is no joking matter," says Caron, striving for a straight face. "What do you think the King will say to your decimating his subjects in this wholesale manner? And you a diplomat in the embryo . . . who ever heard of a diplomat actually fighting?" He shakes his head, balefully. "There'll be international complications, *mon ami* — my word for it!"

"The Bastille!" interpolates Paul, seriously.

"Vincennes!" adds Mirabeau, although he is obviously rather at sea. "I don't know what it is all about, but I'll wager there is a woman mixed up in it, somewhere!"

"This is all news to me," puts in Grandfather. "What mischief have you been getting into, now, Temple?"

"It was an unavoidable adventure, sir. But I did not think it important enough to trouble you with."

"Hark to the modesty of the man!" cries the

Commodore. "From what gossip says, the affair was intriguing enough — and involves certain names of note, so I hear. Out with the true tale, Temple!"

"Since you are so well informed, there is little I can tell you, Commodore," I return, coolly.

"What is this all about?" Dr. Franklin wants to know, eyeing me.

"It seems that Temple came on a band of ruffians in the Marais quarter, the other night," puts in Caron de Beaumarchais, with relish, "who had held up a sedan chair, and were about to relieve the lady in it of her jewels, if nothing else. . . ."

"You're among friends, Temple," cajoled Paul. "Tell us — was the lady's virtue intact?"

I disdain to answer this sally, and Caron goes on.

"Single-handed, our young gentleman from America killed one, and put the others to rout just as the Watch came up, thus indubitably winning the lady's undying gratitude. *Tiens!* I shall incorporate it into a play!" He laughs. "It is the talk of *tout Paris,* Monsieur — but I thought you knew."

"I heard nothing," says Grandfather, slowly. "But I suspect that there must be a bit more to this saga of gallantry. . . . Temple is not the kind to hide his light beneath a bushel!" He looks at me, smiling. "Tell me more, Temple."

"There is little more to add, sir. As Caron has told you, I came on these would-be robbers just after leaving a *bal masqué* at the Hôtel de Barbezieux. Frankly, I would not have thrown myself upon them so recklessly if it had not been for the

woman's scream. That, of course, was something no gentleman could ignore, so I did the only thing possible, and attacked them with the results you already know. But it was not my poor swordsmanship which put them to flight — but the opportune arrival of the Watch."

"Who was the lady?" inquires Caron. "I've heard her identified as everything from a duchess to a dancer from the Italienne. Who was she, really?"

"I don't know," I answer, simply, smiling involuntarily at a certain memory.

"Sly dog! You mean you won't tell!" chuckles the Commodore. "Come — we're all friends, and we'll keep your secret. Who was it?"

I shrug my shoulders.

"Don't be so damned exasperating!" exclaims Paul. "If you won't tell us, we can guess why . . . but you needn't pretend that you don't know it yourself!"

"Temple lies like a gentleman," says Mirabeau, approvingly. "He'll go far."

"He can lie like an epitaph, and outflatter a dedication," declares Grandfather, smilingly. "He learned these arts since he's been in Paris, of course . . . he is intended for a diplomatic career."

"I happen to be telling the truth," I put in, patiently. "The lady did not tell me her name."

"Did you ask her?" demands Mirabeau.

"No." And I smile again, despite myself.

"This younger generation . . ." Beaumarchais appeals to Dr. Franklin. "They're beyond me!"

"Don't be a fool!" says Paul. "Every generation is the same when it comes to women. . . . Can't you see Temple is grinning like a Cheshire cat?"

"Has it ever occurred to you that the lady might not have been young and attractive?" I inquire, mischievously.

"I apologize, Temple," from the Commodore, humorously. "'Pon my soul I do! What rotten luck!"

"My condolences, Temple," adds Mirabeau. "My utmost sympathy."

"And mine," offers the author of the *Barber of Seville*. "I had heard —"

"As it happens, *messieurs*," I grin, "the lady to whom I had the honour of being of some slight assistance was both young and attractive!"

There is a ludicrous silence, and Grandfather, his eyes twinkling, breaks in.

"The lad has more discretion than I gave him credit for," says he, mildly.

"He's a chip of the old block, then," retorts Paul Jones. "Aye — he'll make a diplomat!"

"We are rebuked, and justly," from Caron. "Let Temple keep the secret of his fair conquest to himself. Such gallantry deserved a meet reward."

I catch my grandfather's amused eyes on me, and flush, unaccountably, for Grandfather, of all men, is no prude. Detecting my embarrassment, he seeks to divert the other's attention to other channels. He holds up a letter, and some clippings from a journal.

" Speaking of rewards," Dr. Franklin comments, " I seem to be getting mine on earth, instead of in Heaven."

" Don't tell me that another academy or society has paid tribute to your excellency's greatness," says Caron. " I don't believe there are any left, which haven't, already."

" It's not a society, but an individual," returns Grandfather, with his slow smile. " Raking me over the coals for a small piece I wrote long ago."

" Who is the daring man? "

" One Marat — Jean Paul Marat. He has written to me before, telling me of his investigations of the properties of heat and light. I apparently offended him by failing to become enthusiastic over his deductions, for he has reprinted something written many years ago, which I have long repented, and takes me to task for corrupting the morals of the young! "

" What piece was that? "

" A letter of advice I once wrote to a young man — (never intended altogether seriously, of course) — which gained some notoriety, many years ago; a letter advising him on the choice of a mistress. If you will remember, Paul, it caused some distress to a number of our good compatriots."

" Do I remember it? " The Commodore chuckles with glee. " What a fuss it did kick up among our good hypocrites! " He turns to the two Frenchmen. " Would you believe it, *messieurs,* it was often printed in the Colonies with the most amusing por-

tions of all expurgated from the text — for fear it would corrupt a lot of damned Puritan — "

Dr. Franklin holds up a hand in protest.

" Our countrymen are as yet too provincial to be broad-minded in these matters, my friend. Personally, I believe the tenets of Puritanism on love and matrimony to be contrary to the laws of nature, for I hold that as a sexual being woman needs man less than man needs woman. I have been assailed often enough on my views of sex and life, but I have never known of a great man — or a saint or a genius, for that matter — who was not endowed with unusual erotic powers. Sex is for the perpetuation of life, therefore a beautiful, a divinely sacred thing — not vile and shameful, as some would have us think! "

" It is the hypocrisy of men that is to be blamed," says Mirabeau.

" Men? " Grandfather frowns. " Men I find to be a sort of being very badly constructed; for they are generally more easily provoked than reconciled, more disposed to do mischief to each other than to make reparation, much more easily deceived than undeceived, and having more pride — and even pleasure — in killing, than in begetting one another. Without a blush they assemble in great armies at noon-day to destroy, and when they have killed as many as they can, they exaggerate the number to augment the fancied glory. But they creep into corners or cover themselves with the darkness of night when they mean to beget — as being ashamed of a virtuous action! "

"Would you have them practise the delights of love in the street, Monsieur — like any pair of amorous dogs?" queries Caron, his eyes twinkling.

"I speak rather figuratively, not literally. But that answers itself, in marriage."

"Not all men are married —"

"For which thank *le bon Dieu!*" interpolates Mirabeau, piously.

"That is their misfortune!" retorts Dr. Franklin. "All men should marry — and marry early. For instance, I think there are far too many bachelors and old maids in England. There should be more marriages there. In France, the situation is more simplified since most unattached men make a practice of keeping mistresses."

"The French are much more civilized than the Anglo-Saxons in that respect," I contribute. "Here in France society is interested only in a man's personality and ideals — and his morals or religion is his own affair!"

"Nevertheless, every man should marry," asserts Franklin. "And if he cannot afford to marry, he is wiser to have a mistress. For celibate he cannot be, since no man was born free of the temptations that saints have not always been able to control!"

"One wonders if you, yourself, Dr. Franklin, were always able to resist temptation," chuckles Beaumarchais, a bit daringly, to my mind. "Don't tell us that the idol of France has feet of clay!"

It is just because of his human qualities — his weaknesses together with his genius — that France

adores Grandfather, I think, inwardly. And wonder how frank Grandfather will be, for he is ever reserved about his own morals.

"When I was young," says Grandfather Franklin with his cryptic smile, "I conceived the idea of preparing a moral code with which to govern my life — a compendium of all the virtues I thought it necessary to attain. There were thirteen of them, which I proposed to master one by one, and they ranged from "Temperance" and "Silence" to "Chastity" and "Humility." Each rule was written out, and each virtue had a ruled page for good and bad marks."

"What was your rule for Chastity?" demands Mirabeau, with great interest.

Grandfather closes his eyes, as if remembering, the smile still lingering, as always. He opens them, and they too, are smiling, in the same self-amused fashion.

"'Chastity: Rarely use venery but for health or offspring,'" he quotes, slowly. "'Never to dullness, weakness, or to the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.'"

"And what was your elixir for Humility?" asks Beaumarchais.

"Number Thirteen? 'Imitate Jesus and Socrates.'" Grandfather laughs one of his rare laughs. "I was only twenty-two then — perhaps twenty-three. . . . Further comment should be unnecessary."

"What I want to know," says Paul Jones," is

whether or not you ever got as far as Chastity. No one's interested in Humility, except prisoners or priests."

"Like most other people, in those days I thought that human appetites were given to man for his enjoyment, and that their gratification was a venial sin, at most." He sighs. "Chastity? . . . That hard-to-be-governed passion of youth hurried me frequently into intrigues with low women who fell into my way," he muses, "which, frankly, were attended with some expense and great inconvenience, besides a continual risk to my health by a distemper, which of all things I dreaded, though by great good luck I escaped it."

A little silence falls upon the group, as if his listeners realize that they are hearing confidences that have never been told before, and perhaps will not be told ever again, and they are partly right. Grandfather, lost in thought, lies back in his chair with his letters on his lap, gazing into the Seine. Impulsively, spurred by something engendered by one of Grandfather's earlier remarks, I break the silence.

"You were twenty-two — or -three — you said, sir — when you wrote that code?"

"Yes. Just a year or two younger than you are, yourself, now, Temple."

"Did Father ever follow your example —" I begin, impulsive, and add hastily "— in writing for himself a code of conduct?"

It is cruel, perhaps, but I can not have kept it in, for the life of me. Grandfather says nothing, but

looks at me with such perturbed eyes that I lower my own, biting my lip, and cursing myself for my thoughtless malice. The shaft, I know, has gone home. My father, William Temple Franklin, had been born in Grandfather's twenty-third year, just prior to his marriage to the former Deborah Reade, whose own husband had run away and left her. Out of wedlock had Father been born, his maternity a mystery to this day — (Grandfather can keep his secrets!) — as much a mystery, in fact, as the identity of the mother of my aunt, John Foxcroft's wife, who, like Father, was illegitimate. Yes, out of wedlock had Father been born, in the very year in which Grandfather Franklin had written that code with such moral earnestness and introspection!

A telling shaft, that question of mine, and perhaps a cruel one. But perhaps easier to understand if you know what barbed prick in my heart prompts it. For I too, of course, am a natural child, entitled to the name of Franklin only because Grandfather insisted upon it, many years since. Until he did so, my father called me William Temple. . . . It is odd, under the circumstances, that my sympathies, for some reason I have never yet been able to define, have been with Father, and that I have so often been so antagonistic to Grandfather Franklin, to whom, after all, I owe everything.

I think on these things, in the infinitesimal space of time in which we measure miserable glances, and as I meet his gaze I am white-faced and defiant, although full of bitter regret within. To my surprise,

Grandfather is the first to surrender, and there is something supremely touching in the spectacle of the defeat of a man who has never surrendered — who has never excused an action or made an apology in his life.

Hastily Grandfather Franklin picks up again the letter which contains the man Marat's tirade, and begins to read it aloud. And then I know that it is I, who have gone down in defeat. As he reads, biting tears spring to my eyes, and I turn away, to stare at the blue of quiescent Seine.

2. This Marat has a scurrilous tongue.

" ' This great teacher of the young, this wise man from out of the West — does he not hasten from the Institute to adorn himself in lace and brocade, then, as his ambassadorial coach dashes through the streets of Paris, does he not turn over in his mind the *grossièretés* he will indulge in at the supper table?' "

Grandfather looks up, with a wry smile, and Commodore Jones seems about to have an apoplectic fit.

" The rascal should be horse-whipped! " Paul explodes. " *Tonnerre de Brest!* If I had him here, I'd do it myself! "

" And I would help, *mon ami!* " exclaims Caron de Beaumarchais, as indignant. " Any man who offers insult to my friend insults me! If he were a gentleman, I'd call him out! "

" Not so fast, my friends! " counsels Grandfather Franklin, seeming rather amused. " I thank you for

your sentiments, but doubt the necessity for any such procedure."

"But your reputation, *mon cher Maître* —" begins Mirabeau, seriously.

"My reputation has been assailed by better men," says Dr. Franklin, dryly, and I know he is thinking of the vicious attacks of the Lees, and Izard and John Adams, and other enemies back home in America. "Spots of dirt thrown on my character I suffer while fresh to remain," he continues, quaintly. "I do not choose to spread them by endeavoring to remove them, but rely on the vulgar adage that they would all rub off when they were dry."

"This *Advice To A Young Man,*" says Mirabeau. "I have heard of it, of course — but I confess that this is one of your writings which have escaped me. Have you it in the house?"

Grandfather nods, smiling.

"Let Temple get it," suggests the Commodore. "It's well worth reading again, and the advice is still as good as it ever was."

Grandfather demurs. I demur.

"In view of Temple's recent adventure with the mysterious lady and the footpads," adds Beaumarchais, slyly, "it might be wise for him to read it again. Perhaps the lady in question will turn out to be the young man's answer to his adviser!"

"We'll have Temple read it aloud," declares Paul, grinning. "We're never too old to profit by Poor Richard's wisdom!"

"This will be, of a verity, the true, unexpurgated letter?" Mirabeau inquires.

"Of a verity," returns Grandfather, in his best French, seeing that they would have it, despite him.

In the end, I go to fetch it.

3. "June 25th, 1745.

"My Dear Friend:

"I know of no medicine fit to diminish the violent natural inclinations you mention, and if I did, I think I should not communicate it to you. Marriage is the proper *remedy. It is the most natural state of man, and, therefore, the state in which you are most likely to find solid happiness. Your reasons against entering it at present appear to me not well founded. The circumstantial advantages you have in view of postponing it are not only uncertain, but they are small in comparison with that of the thing itself.*

"It is the man and woman united that make the complete human being. Separate, she wants his force of body and strength of reason. He, her softness, sensibility, and acute discernment. Together they are more likely to succeed in the world. A single man has not nearly the value he would have in a state of union. He is an incomplete animal. He resembles the odd half of a pair of scissors. If you get a prudent, healthy wife, your industry in your profession, with her good economy, will be a fortune sufficient.

"But if you will not take this counsel, and persist in thinking a commerce with the sex inevitable, then

I repeat my former advice, that in all your amours you should prefer old women to young ones. *You call this a paradox and demand my reasons. They are these:*

" 1st — Because they have more knowledge of the world, and their minds are better stored with observations; their conversation is more improving and more lastingly agreeable.

" 2nd — Because when women cease to be handsome, they study to be good. To maintain their influence, over men, they supply the diminution of beauty by an augmentation of utility. They learn to do a thousand services, small and great, and are the most tender and useful of all friends when you are sick. Thus they continue amiable, and hence there is scarcely such a thing to be found as an old woman who is not a good woman.

" 3rd — Because there is no hazard of children, which, irregularly produced, may be attended with much inconvenience.

" 4th — Because, through more experience, they are more prudent and discreet in conducting an intrigue to prevent suspicion. The commerce with them is therefore safe with regard to your reputation and with regard to theirs. If the affair should happen to be known, considerate people might be rather inclined to excuse an old woman who would kindly take

care of a young man, form his manners by her good counsels, and prevent his ruining his health and fortunes among mercenary prostitutes.

" 5th — Because in every animal that walks upright, the deficiency of the fluids that fill the muscles appear first in the highest part. The face first grows lank and wrinkled, then the neck, then the breast and arms; the lower parts continuing to the last as plump as ever: so that, covering all above with a blanket, and regarding only what is below the girdle, it is impossible of two women to know an old one from a young one. And as in the dark all cats are grey, the pleasure of corporeal enjoyment with an old woman is at least equal and frequently superior, every knack being, by practice, capable of improvement.

" 6th — Because the sin is less. The debauching of a virgin may be her ruin, and make her life unhappy.

" 7th — Because the compunction is less. The having made a young girl miserable may give you frequent bitter reflections, none of which can attend the making of an old *woman* happy.

" 8th — and lastly — They are so grateful!

" Thus much for my paradox, but I still advise you to marry directly, being sincerely,

" Your affectionate friend,

" B. FRANKLIN."

4. The quiet garden is ringing with laughter. Even as I read it, I have been convulsed with mirth. Only the author, Dr. Franklin himself, sits back in his great chair with a rather rueful smile on his face, and a faint twinkle in his kindly dark eyes, leaning on the Comtesse de Forbach's gold-headed stick.

"Which parts were expurgated in America?" asks Beaumarchais, after awhile, mopping the tears from his cheeks. He is very emotional, is Caron, like all imaginative people who act out every moment of their lives; given to grievous sobs, when he sobs, I have no doubt — and joyous laughs when he laughs.

I glance at the script.

"The Reasons numbered Five, Six, and Eight," I tell him. "Shall I prepare a list of ancient ladies for your future gallantries, *Messieurs?*"

"I'm afraid you've stolen a march on us, yourself, you young rogue!" roared Beaumarchais. "What of your lady of the sedan chair?"

"A hit!' exclaims Paul Jones. "Caron has you there, Temple! You're hoisted on your own petard!"

"She was young and fair!" I exclaim, vexed. "She wore a mask, but I'll swear she was both young and fair!" I think of that haunting, faint perfume that completed the last enchantment of that little world sealed in by driving rain . . . that perfume whose memory never leaves me, like that of a lost, sad dream. "I'll swear she was both young — and fair," I repeat, slowly. "Though she wore a mask . . ."

"And you never troubled yourself to take it off!" marvels Beaumarchais. "Optimist!"

"He thought the mask was a blanket," suggests the ribald Commodore, gleefully. "Wasn't that in the *Advice,* too — about the blanket?"

"You don't understand," I persist, heedless of their jesting, in my own absorption. "It was dark, and was pouring cats and — "

"'All cats are grey in the dark' — " quotes the author of *The Marriage of Figaro,* with great gusto. "Come — confess, *mon cher ami.* What really happened that night?"

"*Mais, oui* — tell us!" urges Mirabeau, with anticipation in his Gallic eyes.

Of a sudden I emerge from my trance, as it were — for the memory of that faint perfume and the woman sitting in my arms is heavy in my mind — and I realize, rather tardily, that I am being baited. Like all sensitive people, I have a horror of being baited; it annoys me. Ordinarily, however, I could pass it off good-humouredly enough, but today there is an undercurrent of antagonisms and pains between Grandfather and myself, and I am more highly strung than usual. I glance at Grandfather Franklin, and see that there is a gleam of amusement in his eyes. Inexplicably, I reason that amusement, in the unthinking absurdity of my youth, for youth loves to feel itself important — tries to believe itself mature. Somehow, it seems to me that my grandfather is enjoying the spectacle of my being teased, and a cold, unreasoning fury wells up within me.

I turn to the three good-humouredly mocking faces — to the trio of worldlings who actually have no inkling that I am not at one with them in this hilariously earthy mood.

"If you must know *Messieurs,*" I inform them, pleasantly, "I suppose I must tell you. Unless I am gravely in error, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Minister of the United States of America to the Court of France, is in all likelihood destined to become a great-grandfather in the not-too-distant future!"

With which parting thrust at that gentleman, I make the company a courtly bow, and take my leave with what dignity I can command, acutely conscious that I have made an unconscionable ass of myself, and certain that not only does Grandfather know that fact, but knows that I know he knows it, which makes it all the more unpalatable.

As I walk up the path toward the Hôtel de Valentinois, hotly aware of the laughter ringing behind me, I pass Champagne, our butler, going toward them with another bottle of the Xeres they have been drinking.

At the head of the garden path, I pause, wryly smiling my discomfiture, and as I do, their voices come to me; already they have found a new subject for discussion, this unique quartette.

The Commodore mentions that he has had an offer to go to Russia, to serve the Empress Catherine, with the promise of the title of Admiral, and great rewards, and bewails the fact that he knows no Russian.

"You won't have to know Russian," Mirabeau of the lion's face tells Paul. "Everyone with whom you will come in contact will most likely speak French."

"Perhaps," admits the Commodore. "Nevertheless, I like to know the language of the men who serve under me."

"A mistress is the best teacher of languages," puts in Grandfather, quoting from one of his own Poor Richard sayings, and although I cannot see his face, I can well imagine the twinkle in his eye, and the twist of his cryptic smile.

"But I don't know any Russian ladies!" complains the gallant sea-fighter, humorously.

A second roar of laughter echoes through the quiet garden, and rolls over the sunlit bosom of the blue Seine. I return to the Legation's chancelry.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

Of The Lady Of Moulin Joli And The Stair Of A Hundred Steps

CUNÉGONDE. . . .

I stand at the foot of the Stair of a Hundred Steps, and wait for Cunégonde, and there is a restlessness in me — a fear in my heart that she will not come, as I stand there in the shadows, waiting. I know she *will* come. Yet that knowledge does not keep me from feeling anxious. Love is like that.

I have seen her at the candle-lit supper table only ten minutes previous, and I have seen the sparkle in her eyes over the silver and crystal and shining damask, and I know she will come. For I have winked — the barest flicker of a wink — and she knows that I will be waiting in the garden at the foot of the great stair; she closed her fan — the embroidered fan with the cupids upon it which I gave her Christmas last — and I know she will be there. So here I am in the shadows and the moonlight, waiting for my lady.

It is a Wednesday night, and we are supping at the Brillons; unless deterred by other engagements, we sup at the Brillons every Wednesday and Saturday. It is very pleasant to visit *Moulin Joli,* for I, of course, am in love with Cunégonde, and like to tease her sister Aldegonde, and Grandfather is in love with Madame Brillon de Jouy, and likes to play chess with Monsieur Brillon when he isn't carrying on an

interminable discussion with Madame, or listening to her play on the clavecin.

Before I go on with my chronicle about Cunégonde and myself, however, perhaps I'd better add a word about the Brillons, who live at *Moulin Joli,* a little island in the Seine not two leagues from Passy. Madame Brillon was one of the rich and well-connected Hardancourts, and it is common gossip that she was married against her will to Monsieur Brillon, the wealthy Chief Tax Collector of Paris. Brillon was actually a man of low birth, and is twenty-four years older than Madame Brillon, who is now several years lacking of forty. She is one of the most beautiful and intelligent women in France, and it is little wonder that Grandfather, despite his age, is in love with her.

Not that Monsieur Brillon minds. He is large and stout and jovial; very fond of broad stories, which he will exchange by the hour with Grandfather, and, to put it delicately, is of a very roaming disposition. Nevertheless, he is very good-hearted, generous to a fault, an indulgent husband and parent, and his manners are as simple as his tastes. He is an enthusiastic admirer of Doctor Franklin, and rather pleased that Grandfather should be in love with his wife, and she, in a sense, with him, for he thinks that there can never really be anything beyond a flirtation between these two, and it will keep her attention away from other men.

They are very much mismated, these two. To Monsieur, marriage is very much a physical relation,

I judge; to Madame, a psychical one. Madame Brillon is highly sensitive, keen and imaginative, and hungry for affection, rather than passion. She gets that affection, rather vicariously, from Grandfather; her husband, recognizing her need for the attention he cannot give her, is satisfied for her to get it from his old friend Franklin, while he, in turn, surreptitiously satisfies himself with some pretty tavern maid or midinette. Grandfather has simplified his life, and taken a great load off his shoulders.

There was the affair of Mademoiselle Jupin, of course. She was the governess of the Brillon girls, and when Madame Brillon learned that Mademoiselle Jupin was cementing her position by gifts of unchaste kisses to the never-unwilling Monsieur Brillon, she took her troubles to Dr. Franklin. He, in turn, remonstrated with the governess, who then astonished him with a proposition to come to the Hôtel de Valentinois to live. There was much excitement at the time, and Grandfather sent the baggage packing, gave Madame Brillon some good advice on the holding of a husband, and arranged a reconciliation between the latter pair. It was not long, however, before Monsieur Brillon's errant affections were wandering again, and soon Grandfather had Madame Brillon to himself.

Madame Brillon calls Grandfather " Papa," and he addresses her as " Daughter." She sits on his lap for hours at a time, talking out her heart on every subject under the sun, and Grandfather listens sym-

pathetically, and kisses her neck; he has a perfect passion for kissing ladies' necks!

However, there is a real love, a great affection, between these two. Madame Brillon, moody and temperamental, takes great pleasure in weeping on his shoulder, while he gently strokes her hair. They constantly exchange letters and visits; take long walks together in their respective gardens or in the Tuileries; play together — she on her clavecin, Grandfather on the harmonica he invented. They talk for hours at a time, sometimes playing chess while she sits in a covered bath-tub . . . they delight in talking — dote on talking! And one can hardly blame Grandfather for the pleasure he takes in these conversations, for Madame Brillon — although she is religious, a bit introspective, and leans somewhat toward introversion — is always a match for him in wit and fantasy, in fencing with words and in joyously sophisticated dialectics. Furthermore, she surpasses him in culture, the subtleties of intuition, and the mastery of languages. Grandfather is even fonder of Madame Brillon than he was of Madame Helvétius, whom he so badly wanted to marry . . . but of her, and of Madame Brillon, again, more anon.

2. The garden of *Moulin Joli* is one of the first English gardens in France, and has winding shady walks and twisting streams, in the serpentine manner of English gardens, rather than the straight, stiff formality of the French. But the Stair of a Hundred

Steps is pure French, for it is a great staircase of a hundred wide, shallow steps leading down to a magnificent lawn. I have a secret passion for stately staircases, and the rococo setting of the Stair of a Hundred Steps never fails to touch some sensitive chord in me with its sheer grandeur and beauty, as does the proportionately greater grandeur and beauty of Versailles.

It is impressive and white and unreal in the soft moonlight, this staircase overlooking the Seine, and the scene has the delicate, exquisite beauty of a Watteau fan. But I have no eyes for the beauty of the night. My eyes are fixed upon the top of the staircase, as I stand, immobile and elegantly clad, in the shadows below.

She comes at last, my lady, and my heart leaps despite myself at sight of her, as she appears at the head of the stairs, and, holding up her long, voluminous skirts, begins to trip down. I cannot wait, but emerging into the moonlight, I bound up the stairs two steps at a time, meeting her at the second landing. She drops me a curtsy, my Cunégonde, and I bow low, and kiss her hand. Then, taking it into mine, and holding it ceremoniously high, lead her down the broad stairway toward the lawn, much as if we were descending a grand staircase in some great house, on some formal occasion — she, with her other hand still holding her dress, I, with my other perched on my sword-hilt, my hat under my arm.

At the second landing we pause however, and I would kiss her hand again, but she, dropping the

formal pose with a giggle, suddenly breaks away, and begins to run down the great stairs as fast as she can, her little heels clicking and her laugh coming between little pants. I am after her, of course, but do not catch her — purposely — until she has left the open lawn, and darted down a shadowy alley toward the river. Then do I pursue her, indeed, to such effect that in another moment she is in my arms, and I am struggling with the coquette to claim my reward.

So my kiss I get at length — a quick, ardourless kiss such as unawakened young girls give — but it thrills me with a sense of victory, nevertheless. Cunégonde lies quiescent in my arms for a moment, then is out of them, and, hand in hand, we are walking back toward the lawn, the moonlight drawing us like a magnet. She resembles her mother in her cool, proud young beauty, does Cunégonde, and like her mother, I imagine, she is almost entirely sexless, her ardours destined to be those of the mind, alone. A hint of this floats through my subconscious, and I realize that I, at least, am like her father, and my grandfather, in that respect — none of the three of us would be satisfied for long with mental satisfactions alone, being men, and men being what they are . . . although Grandfather is very old, of course, and nearly done with life.

Yet Cunégonde is the type of girl, I tell myself, whom I intend eventually to marry. She has led a sheltered, luxurious existence, accustomed to the good things of life, and the beautiful. She is rich, she

is poised and cultured — despite her innocence in some things — and she will make a wife to be proud of . . . not that any or all of these things have consciously entered into my mind in any calculating way, before.

The affair began by my practically growing up, the past six or seven years, with the Brillon girls — first playing with them, then teasing them, then tolerating them, and finally, as they suddenly bloomed into attractive young womanhood, flirting with both of them — and eventually falling in love with Cunégonde, the older. It has been a long, slow, almost imperceptible process — something that has been taken for granted. Propinquity has had a great deal to do with it, of course — imagination, more. We are both young and romantic; it is almost inevitable, under the circumstances, that we have fallen in love. Whether we are temperamentally or spiritually suited to each other, I have never taken the time to even wonder about . . . youth is like that.

As to practical things, if I have thought about it at all, it has only been to affirm to myself the fact that she will make an ideal wife for me in the career I am to follow — in living with me the brilliant social life I intend to go on leading. For I am intended, of course, for the diplomatic service; as Grandfather's heir, and with his influence, I shall doubtless some day get a good post. Cunégonde, with her money and looks and background, will make an excellent wife for me, and I am glad that I am in love with her, for that reason. Whether or not we should be physically

and mentally compatible — which is the essence of successful marriage — I do not know. In my youthful ignorance of life, I have never hitherto attempted to analyze it, at least, not consciously.

In short, I love Cunégonde Brillon, and some day intend to marry her.

3. We sit on one of the lower steps of the Stair of a Hundred Steps — I, leaning against the marble balustrade, Cunégonde, in the crook of my arm, leaning against my shoulder. There are trees behind the balustrade, and, silhouetted against the moonlight, they throw protecting shadows over us, measuring their fantastic outlines upon the lawn. Most of the stair, however, is flooded with moonlight, as is the broad lawn, and the moonlight has drawn a silver train across the Seine.

We sit on the staircase, we two, as young lovers have sat on staircases from time immemorial — (for what else *are* staircases for) — and we hold hands, and I kiss the tip of her ear, occasionally, or the soft nape of her neck, and we talk. Somehow, I never even think to grow more demonstrative with Cunégonde; odd enough that, since mine is a most demonstrative and affectionate nature.

Cunégonde is the sort of girl who does not enjoy being kissed, particularly, and never loses herself, even when she is kissing. Not that she isn't as much in love as I am, and as jealous. She wants to know everything I've done since last I've seen her — whom I've seen and where I've been . . . with

whom I've danced, and why. A woman's questions. I give her a faithful account of my recent activities — with a few discreet deletions, including, of course, the affair of the sedan chair.

I tell her of my visit to Court, the day before, with Grandfather; Cunégonde never tires off hearing of the glories and wonders of Versailles. Of my having seen the King and Queen dine in public — along with several hundred other privileged witnesses of that ceremony. Of whom I met at Court D'Armanda's and at Vergennes'. Guardedly, of the De Barbezieux ball. Of a number of other dinners and supper-parties, garden-fêtes and receptions. Cunégonde is always interested in social matters — in gossip, in display, in clothes, in magnificent entertainment. Like myself, she has a flair for society — which is at least one thing we have in common. Unlike myself, she seldom is permitted to take part in social functions. In France *jeunes filles* seldom appear in public, formally, before their marriages; after marriage, their freedom is correspondingly untrammelled, in contrast to their previous sheltered lives.

As all lovers do, we discuss the future. We have never actually talked of marriage between ourselves, nor have I asked her to marry me, in so many words. Instead, we have tacitly taken it for granted. And now, when we talk about the future, it is with the inference that it is a future which is to be spent together.

"When I marry," says Cunégonde, dreamily, "I should like to have a house in the new Faubourg Ste.

Germaine — a great house with many lackeys in mauve-and-silver liveries — I adore mauve-and-silver! — and give smart dinners, and great balls, to which all the nicest people of Paris would fight for invitations! And I should love to have a salon . . . a really important salon — like Madame Geoffrin's salon in the Rue St. Honoré, which Mother says is the meeting-place of all the greatest minds and most important people in France! Or maybe like the Duchesse de Luxembourg's, or the Marquis de Lambert's. Of course, I haven't a title — but neither has Madame Geoffrin — "

"And American's wives don't have titles, anyway," I point out, smiling.

"How do you know I'll be an American's wife?" she demands, coquettishly.

"A little bird told me!" and I kiss her ear. "Yes, and we'll have a most fascinating salon, *chérie* — and our house shall have a magnificent staircase. . . . I insist on the staircase, *mon coeur* — and I shall stand at the foot of that most superior staircase, and watch you coming down!"

She squeezes my hand, with excitement.

"You mean you'll lead me down, Temple — and I shall wear the most heavenly gowns — and jewels like Mother's . . . you'll be proud of me, Temple."

"Proud as proud can be, Cunégonde. But suppose, little visionary, that we do not live in Paris. I shall be in the diplomatic service of my country, of course — and there is no saying where I may be sent."

"Wherever it will be, you will be the Minister

of the United States," says Cunégonde, confidently, "and as such, received everywhere, as you are now. We can have our house and salon in any capital . . . but I would rather it would be in Paris, of course, and I'm sure it will be."

"Why are you so sure, Beautiful?"

"Because it is logical," says Cunégonde, simply. That is the type of mind she has; logic is ever paramount. "You have had this experience with your grandfather, and know more about his job than any other man except himself. Besides, Doctor Franklin is the greatest man in America, if not in the world, and anything he wants, he can get. If he wants them to make you Minister here, after he resigns, or is too old, I'm sure President Washington and Congress would do it for his sake."

I am silent, not caring to tell her that her conception of Grandfather's relations with Congress is rather distorted; in fact, they are none too cordial, and he has many enemies in power, in America. Already they have caused to be discharged from office many of his relatives, for whom he originally procured offices — his son-in-law, and my uncle, Richard Bache, father of Benny, here with us, who was removed from the Postmastership; my cousin, Jonathan Williams, who was removed from his post at Nantes; and several others. Even when Grandfather recently requested each of the Peace Commissioners to name me secretary of the Commission, Congress refused; and Congress has still failed to reply to his request that I be made officially the chargé-d'affaires

of the Legation. At present, I am only Grandfather's private secretary.

Nevertheless, with all these rebuffs, I am young and hopeful and ambitious, and have confidence in Grandfather's ability to aid my career and push me ahead, so my depression is only temporary.

" You will make a charming ' Excellency,' " I tell Cunégonde. " How will you like some day being an ambassador's wife? "

" *Merveilleux!* " she returns, promptly. " Do you think the Americans would like to have me for their Minister's wife? "

" They'd love you! " I tell her, sincerely. " And you'd adore them. And America."

" I'm sure I would," says Cunégonde, without enthusiasm. " But we wouldn't ever have to live in America, would we? "

" Not all of the time, of course, but some of the time, I'm sure. Don't you think you'd like living there? Life in America isn't as brilliant or interesting as it is here, to be sure — we are provincials for the most part, you know, and I'm afraid Philadelphia and New York would be very dull for you after Paris. But you'd get to like it in time. And the country." I smile. " If you marry me, you know, Cunégonde, you would no longer be a subject of the King, but an American citizen."

" Really? " says Cunégonde, with doubt in her dark eyes. " *Vraiment?* "

" Yes. And being an American citizen will be something to be proud of, let me tell you! Some day

we shall be one of the greatest nations on earth! Grandfather says so, and he knows."

"Dr. Franklin knows everything," says Cunégonde, simply.

"We are young, we are strong — we have room to expand," I continue, my thoughts suddenly back on that country I have been away from for so long. "Our population is increasing much faster than England's, in proportion — and, what's more to the point, every man is his neighbour's equal before God and his fellow man. The spirit of freedom is in our soil, the wine of liberty in the very air!" I lean forward, ardently. "Some day, Cunégonde, you'll be very proud to be an American — the wife of an American!" I smile . . . "'The lady from America!'"

"How do you know I will be?" she asks.

How do I know, indeed? The thought smites me like a thunderbolt.

"But you *are* going to be — aren't you?" I demand, feebly.

She is silent for a moment, her head turned away. My heart seems to stand still.

"You've never really asked me, Temple."

"Never asked . . . ?" I seize her hands. "Then, darling — I ask you now. Will you marry me?"

"I don't know," says Cunégonde.

"Don't know? You mean you don't love me? Don't know whether you love me enough?"

"Of course not, silly! I mean I don't know

whether or not *Papa* and *Maman* will let me marry you."

I am momentarily silent, stunned at the mere possibility of the Brillons refusing me. The thought of marrying Cunégonde without their consent, of course, is unthinkable. Such things merely are not done, in our strata of society. But their consent I would get, or move the stars from their courses!

"Your parents will consent! Once they know how much we mean to each other, they *must* consent!"

"*Peut-être!*" says Cunégonde, calmly. "And perhaps not."

"What do you mean?" blankly.

"There are many things to be taken into consideration, no doubt," says Cunégonde, in that settled, reasoning manner typical of the Gaul, which I had never seen her use, hitherto. "Marriage is an important step in life, particularly for a girl. There are many things to be considered."

"If you mean money, I am sure that will be all right," I tell her, confidently. "I am my grandfather's heir, and he is rich."

'It is not only money," says this new Cunégonde suddenly grown mature. "But we cross our bridges too hastily. There is time to worry about these matters later."

"I don't see why we should put it off," I point out. "Why can't I go to Grandfather, now, and ask him to speak to your parents on my behalf? They are all great friends, of course . . . luckily for us!"

"No! You must not say a word to him!" cries Cunégonde, hastily, in some alarm.

"Why not?" I am astonished.

"Because I wish it!" She is imperious, my lady. "There is plenty of time — ages of time . . . we are both young. And I want time to think. You must not hurry me."

Which makes me more insistent, naturally, than ever.

"That is ridiculous! You love me, don't you?"

"I think so," judicially.

"'Think so!'" in hurt tones.

"Well, I love you, then!" She gives me her cheek to kiss — a cheek cool as that of the marble Venus who looks down on us from the balustrade. "But —"

"But what?" half-angrily.

"I must prepare the way with *Maman*. *Papa* does not count. He will do anything that I and Aldegonde ask — providing it is with *Maman's* consent. It is she whom we must win over. It will take time."

"But she likes me, doesn't she?"

"Of course she likes you . . . still —" Cunégonde hesitates. "She knows you have faults."

Lightning-like, I think back over the high-lights of my bachelor career which might conceivably have come to Madame Brillon's attention. I can think of nothing. Nevertheless, I am disturbed.

"What does she think of me?"

Cunégonde hesitates, and I am forced to prompt her several times, before she will admit the truth.

" She likes you, Temple, but *Maman* says that you make fun of the Americans in Paris; that you imitate some of Dr. Franklin's mannerisms, such as his long silences and his way of telling stories, and you put on airs of importance, living, as it were, in his reflected glory. . . . *Maman* says you will outgrow these, of course, but that you do not realize how ridiculous it makes you look. She says that your fashionable friends flatter you and cater to you, and that you do not realize that it is for your grandfather's sake, and not your own. *Maman* says they call you ' Franklinet ' behind your back! "

I redden, there in the shadows. Redden, and glow with rage and shame, chiefly, of course, because I know that Cunégonde's mother's indictment is true. Yet I am none the less humiliated and angered; none of us like to be told our weaknesses, particularly those which we already know we possess.

" Don't feel badly about what I said," comforts Cunégonde. " *Maman* doesn't really mean it, and she does like you. She says people call you haughty, but it's only pride. She says that you're really very handsome, and have unusual charm and personality, but that you've been spoiled, never having had a mother to look after you — and living so long abroad with your grandfather."

I do not answer, but stiffen, nevertheless. Cunégonde, all unwitting, has touched me in a sore spot — that reference to the mother I do not possess — the mother whom I not only never knew, but whose very name and identity I've never known. It is the one

sore which has always been festering in the core of my heart, and the knowledge that the Brillons have doubtless discussed it is little less than maddening to me. Cunégonde, artless, innocent, does not suspect this. I am silent, my throat tight with pain, and my eyes stinging with tears; I am glad that she is still leaning against me, and that we are in shadow, so that she cannot see my eyes.

" Don't be angry," says Cunégonde. " I like you, whatever you are, and if *Maman* and *Papa* let me, I shall marry you, and some day be an ' Excellency ! ' " gayly. " *Alors* — tell me that you are not angry ! "

Having driven in the barb, she is now attempting to pull it out ! It suddenly occurs to me, deep in my mind, that if Cunégonde really loved me, she would not have repeated to me what her mother had said, even if she had believed it herself. One loves people for their faults, with their faults, sometimes even because of their faults. But when one loves, one doesn't throw those faults in their faces !

It occurs to me that this is the time to analyse Cunégonde and her love for me — to get at the real Cunégonde whom I so desire to marry. But I love her, and I do not wish to risk discovering any faults in her — (again my theory on faults, coming back on me like a boomerang !) — and I shut my mind to the topic.

I am just about to speak, when suddenly her cool hand comes up and presses warningly on my mouth.

" *Tranquille !* " whispers Cunégonde. " Someone is coming."

There are voices suddenly heard in the moonlight, breaking into the enchanted stillness of the night. We sit there, immobile in the shadows under the balustrade, near the foot of the Stair of a Hundred Steps, and the voices of Madame Brillon and Grandfather Franklin float into our ken.

Softly but quickly Cunégonde disengages herself from my loose embrace, and for once I make no attempt to hold her there, even if we are hidden by the shadows, for my heart is heavy with bitterness. The voices of Madame Brillon and Grandfather turn my thoughts back to her discussion of me, and my lack of a mother's care . . . to my real lack of a right to the name of Franklin, since my father never married my mother; and, for that matter, to my father's own right to the use of that name.

Of a sudden, startlingly, it flashes on me that it is Grandfather, to whom I owe so much, who initiated that line of bastardy — who sowed the original seed of that strain of illegitimacy . . . a fantastic thought flashes across my brain-pan. Am I, too, destined to carry on the heritage of sin Grandfather so unwittingly founded?

I shiver, unaccountably, and of a sudden I find Cunégonde's hand in mine, pressing it warningly, and the contact sets my chaotic mind off on a new tangent. No, the line of the bar sinister will die with me, in that sense. . . . I shall marry Cunégonde, and my children shall have a right to bear the name of Franklin, and carry it on to yet greater fame than even Grandfather has given the name.

4. Slowly the two come down the Stair of a Hundred Steps, deep in conversation, as always, and oblivious of the moon or the night. Madam Brillon hangs on Grandfather's arm, apparently, but it is more than likely that she is supporting him, rather than he, her.

Slowly they descend, pass us, unnoticing — so deep are the shadows, and so engrossed are they in their talk — and continue across the lawn toward the Seine, and the path which leads along it, out of sight. But while they pass near us, we cannot help but overhear part of the conversation. And as I grasp its tenor, I am figuratively all ears, for, coincidentally enough, it is concerning marriage.

Madame Brillon is speaking, evidently complaining. And Grandfather speaks, in his turn, in his gentle, philosophical voice. As they come nearer, we hear them more distinctly.

"Marriage," Madame Brillon is saying, in an inexpressibly sad voice, "marriage, in this country, is made by weight of gold. On one end of the scale is placed the fortune of a boy, on the other that of a girl; when equality is found, the affair is ended to the satisfaction of the relatives. One does not dream of consulting taste, age, congeniality of character; one marries a young girl whose heart is full of youth's fire and its cravings, to a man who has used them up; then one exacts that this woman be virtuous!" she sighs, does Madame Brillon. "My friend, this story is mine, and of how many others! I shall do my best that it shall not be that of my

daughters, but, alas, shall I be mistress of their fate?"

She is weeping, is Madame Brillon, there in the moonlight, and I see Grandfather put a comforting arm around her, and see her lay her head on his shoulder, as they walk across the lawn to its foot. I wait until they disappear into the path that skirts the edge of the Seine, then grasp Cunégonde's hands, joyously.

'You heard what your mother said, *ma chérie!*" My spirits are soaring. "Surely, when she knows we sincerely love each other, *she* will not stand in the way — of all persons!"

"I hope not," says Cunégonde, smiling, but without the enthusiasm I expected to find.

I seize her by the shoulders.

"Do you love me, Cunégonde?"

"*Mais, oui!*" softly.

"And I'm insane about you! . . . Listen, Cunégonde — you must — we must both — persuade them to let us be married, some day!"

"*Ah, oui!* . . ."

"I'll talk to Grandfather about it at the first opportunity —"

"*Mais, non!*" Cunégonde is firm. "I have said, we must wait. The proper time is not yet."

"*Eh, bien. . . !*" I figuratively throw up my hands. "We'll wait, if you say so. But you won't wait too long, Cunégonde, will you? . . . I love you so very much!"

'And I love you, my haughty Temple," says Cuné-

gonde, taking my face suddenly between her palms and shaking it, gently. "But if you care, you will wait. . . ."

"It's a bargain, then. Give me a real kiss, to seal it!"

"*Ah, oui . . . ?*" archly.

But she does, nevertheless. It is warmer, this kiss, than the few others have been, and I am of a sudden very happy; very tender to her.

For long minutes we sit there in the shadows, near the bottom of the Stair of a Hundred Steps, watching the moonlight on the Seine . . . dreaming each our individual dreams.

Cunégonde suddenly stands up, pulling me up after her. Her free hand patting an errant wisp of hair.

"Come, *mon* Temple — we must get back to the house before they return this way . . . *vite!*"

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

Regarding A Sad Song By Candle-Light And A Pair Of Hands

WE MOUNT the Stair of a Hundred Steps, hand in hand, and at the top we pause, and look down — over the lower garden to the Seine, and the country beyond. The moonlight lies like a gossamer veil of silver on the great staircase, and the lawn, and the river, and where the lady in the moon preens herself in the Seine in a dazzling path of soft radiance, it is like a long, jagged tear in the enchanted veil, with the silver shining through. The lawn and stairs are light, but the rest of the garden is dark and shadowy, silent with flower-scent and mystery.

We stand there. I look at Cunégonde, and see that the moonlight has englamoured her, too, in its magic. She is tall and rather wide-shouldered, my Cunégonde, with proud dark eyes, and a rather thin-lipped, carefully etched, proud mouth, and a mass of dark hair rising majestically from the high, intelligent forehead she has inherited from her mother. There is a thin streak of premature grey in her hair — although she is but nineteen — and, somehow, it gives to her appearance an air of distinction, like the *cachêt* of a perfectly chosen jewel against a carefully chosen gown.

It lies enmeshed in her hair like an imprisoned moonbeam, and I think it was really because of that

streak of silvered hair in her young head that I first came to fall in love with her. Men are like that. If pressed to define what specific feature or quality of the woman he loves first intrigued him, he is hard put to it to say, if he remembers. The truth of the matter is that a man falls in love with a dimple, or a pair of eyes, or exquisite eyebrows, or a certain quirk of the mouth when she speaks; or even the incomparably beautiful gesture of a woman when she raises a hand to work mysteries with the hair at the nape of her neck.

She is like a very young *grande dame,* is Cunégonde, and when you look at her you know just how she will look in ten years — in twenty — in forty. Already, at nineteen, so poised and mature does she look that it were hard for a stranger to fix her real age, if he did not know. It is for that poise, for that regal coolness, I think, that I love Cunégonde, most of all. Whenever I look at her it is with a secret little thrill of delight in her; she is so perfect a personification of the girl-woman I have always visualized as my future wife — the potential hostess, the beautiful, worldly great lady who shall help me round off my career in the cosmopolitan world in which I delight to live.

It is an obsession with me — almost a complex — this desire to have a wife of this type. Perhaps it is a natural reaction to my feeling of never having known my mother, and of fearing to give my imagination too free a rein in visualizing her. Or, even, it may be due to a secret inferiority complex on my

part, when I remember how different is our position here in Europe, and back in America. For Grandfather Franklin has never really been welcome in the drawing-rooms of Philadelphia, as have Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and the rest. This has been partly due to his own reputation — the secret scandal of his illegitimate children, which the tongues of Philadelphia wagged about. And so often! And as much due to the personality of my step-grandmother, who had been Deborah Read; she had married Rogers, the potter, the rascally husband who later ran away and deserted her, after which she married Grandfather, who took her to wife in a common-law marriage. It was a happy marriage, until she died only a few years ago. But her story was known in Philadelphia, and, much as I respect her memory for the qualities she possessed, it cannot be denied that the late Mrs. Franklin was an unusually vulgar person. She was uncultured, uneducated, and was possessed of the temper of the devil. Her pet name for Grandfather — "Pappy" — is so well known that it is the favourite political joke of his enemies.

Naturally, Mrs. Franklin was never received socially in Philadelphia, and it is not strange that she was actually jealous of Grandfather's public career. Luckily, her fear of crossing the ocean prevented her from being with Grandfather these many years in England and France. If she had ever listened to his pleas to overcome that fear, and join him, Grandfather would never have accomplished for

our country the achievements which he has, here in France. His wife would never have been fitted for the duties of the wife of a diplomat, much less venturing forth even in any ordinary capacity in the most cultured, sophisticated society in the world. And particularly here in France, where women play such important rôles — intellectually, socially and politically — her presence would have been a great hindrance.

Mrs. Franklin is gone, now; she was a good, well-meaning woman, even if she did detest Father, and, indirectly, myself. That is only natural, for Grandfather brought my father home to her to rear, in the first few months of their marriage; what is not natural, is that Father came to have a genuine liking for his step-mother after he grew up, and was a sincere mourner at her funeral, despite the fact that she had practically driven him out of her house, in his boyhood. Be it as it may, her example, in relation to Grandfather's career, has made a deep impression on my mind, and perhaps it is not strange that the type of woman Cunégonde personifies — the exact opposite to the type of woman Grandfather married — is the type of woman I have set my heart on marrying.

And besides, I love Cunégonde. . . .

2. I am absurdly happy.

I stand there in the moonlight, holding her hands imprisoned in both my own, and literally drinking in her loveliness with my eyes.

"God! — but you're beautiful, Cunégonde!" I tell her, in English.

Cunégonde knows a little English, and smiles. All women like to be told that they are beautiful, whether they really are, or not — even if they know they're not. And Cunégonde is beautiful, and knows it. She smiles, pressing my hands. I bring them to my lips.

"*Menteur!*" she murmurs. And again, "Liar!"

A wave of tenderness, of illimitable happiness, overwhelms me — stirs me profoundly, physically. It is so hard to realize that it is true that one loves, and is loved.

"It's so hard to realize that it is true!" I tell her, again in French.

"That what's true?"

"That you're true! That the eyes of you are mine — that the moonbeam in your hair is mine — that your lips and hair and eyes are mine for always!" She is silent, smiling the vain little smile that women smile when they are being complimented or made love to. "Cunégonde — my dearest dear — it's so hard to believe that you could really love me!"

"*Non?*" archly. "And is it that you are old and ugly and horrid, *mon* Temple? That I should despise you?" She laughs. "You conceited men! Always fishing for compliments! As if I don't know that you have had a thousand sweethearts, Temple Franklin — and could have a thousand more! You and your wild friends — De Keralio, and Ray de Chaumont and Le Veillard! I should

really be jealous . . . in fact, why should I believe you?"

"Cunégonde!"

"Temple!" she mimicks. "How do I know you are not toying with my heart, *Monsieur?*"

I am in no mood to jest.

"Cunégonde! — Can't you ever be serious?"

"'Cunégonde'" — she mimicks me again — "'Is it not that you can ever be serious?'"

Losing patience, I suddenly sweep her into my arms, and begin to kiss her. She resists, protesting.

"Temple! Someone may see!"

"Let them see! . . . Besides, there's no one around. Your mother is with Grandfather near the river, Aldegonde is away, visiting, and your father has gone to town."

"But someone may see, anyway!" She tries to push me away, half-laughing. "We're having company, soon. The Caillots, and the De Trestes. Suppose they were to come out here!"

"And supposing they were? Is it a crime to kiss you?"

"But we're not affianced, yet. . . ."

"Aren't we?" I kiss her again, grimly and thoroughly, contemptuous of the fact that we are revealed so clearly in the moonlight. "Little idiot! I want all the world to see us — all the world to know. I love you!"

Imprisoned in my arms, she smiles up into my eyes, half-mocking, half-tender. For a moment she is all girl, all woman — yielding to her lover. Read-

ing her defeat in my eyes, yet pretending defiance. The moonlight touches the imparadised moonbeam in her hair with enchantment.

"Kiss me—" I tell her, commanding and pleading in one breath. "Cunégonde—"

Of a sudden the resistance melts, and she returns my kiss, her arm creeping around my neck. I am so moved with happiness at this unexpected response, that my caress is not prolonged; we stand there, cheek against cheek, dreaming in the moonlight. . . .

There is the faintest sound somewhere in the garden behind us, and we spring apart. I look back, but see nothing, except the lights from the house twinkling through the trees. I turn, relieved, but Cunégonde is already running away. Vexed, I set off in chase. As it happens, I am between her and the house, so she attempts to reach it by a circuitous route through the maze of alleys. She has a good start, and the advantage of knowing her way, by heart, so that I do not catch up to her until she is quite near the house, in the open of the great terrace on the south, and I dare not take her in my arms again for fear of being seen.

She stands on the top step of the stone terrace, leaning against the balustrade, and breathing a bit unevenly from running. Stands there, mocking me with her eyes, knowing I dare not retaliate. . . .

3. There is someone within the music room; someone playing on the pianoforte. Playing, and

singing. It is an odd voice — a woman's voice, and oddly reminiscent of a thousand things, not one of which I can lay my finger on. Listening, I stand there, momentarily forgetful of Cunégonde, lost in surprise at the curious quality of that unexpected voice, suddenly floating out into the moolit night, from the long French windows of the music room. It is a slightly husky voice, throaty with emotion, like the G-string on an old violin. And yet there is an indescribable lilt to it, with the well-rounded fullness of a bell-like gong. It is hard to describe, that voice, in mere words, but the effect of it upon me is so pronounced, that I am surprised myself. I know I have not heard it anywhere before in all my life. Yet, paradoxically, I know I have heard its ghost.

"Who is that?" I ask Cunégonde, in an abrupt whisper.

She, too, has been listening.

"It's Blanchette Caillot — Madame Caillot. You see, they are already here. Suppose they had seen us!"

"Madame Caillot . . ." I muse. "Do you know, Cunégonde, it's very odd, but I have never met Madame Caillot. We have lived in Passy all these years, and they are practically neighbours of ours — but I have never actually spoken to her in my life. Grandfather knows both of them well, but I know them not at all. I suppose it is because I am so seldom home. . . ."

"She's an angel!" says Cunégonde, with enthusiasm. "She's beautiful — really beautiful, Temple

— but she seldom smiles. I don't think she is very happy."

"Why not?"

"Well, her husband is much older than she is, for one thing," Cunégonde whispers, "and she keeps a great deal to herself, although she comes to see us here, frequently. I don't know why — she has never mentioned it, of course — but I think she is very unhappy. You'll know what I mean when you see her smile . . . it's such a sad, quiet sort of smile. I'm awfully sorry for her."

"I'll wager she's sorry for herself, too!" I return. "I've met those women before. They're so sorry for themselves, they make everyone else uncomfortable, in their bid for sympathy. I don't think I'm going to like her." Yet, listening to that disembodied voice, I know that I am not telling the truth.

"Don't be a silly boy," says Cunégonde. "Blanchette is not that kind of woman at all. She's unusually intelligent — ask your Grandfather. But she has few friends, that is, real friends. She's the kind of woman who never has woman friends, somehow; she cares very little for society. And I don't think she has any men friends to speak of. . . ."

"Why? — is Monsieur Caillot jealous?" idly.

"She has never said so," says Cunégonde, candidly, "but I think she wishes he *were* jealous! The trouble with Monsieur Caillot is that he isn't jealous at all. He's downright indifferent! Poor Blanchette! Although she doesn't, as I said, seem to care

for society, she's young, and does like to go about and meet people. But Mother says that Monsieur neglects Blanchette frightfully, and she's pretty lonely. And Mother knows what *that* is like — " Cunégonde catches herself, in some confusion, and I pretend I do not know what she is talking about — that I do not know the real state of affairs between her parents. She hurries on, rather embarrassed. " Poor Blanchette. . . . I *am* sorry for her! "

I say nothing, listening to the music. Cunégonde goes on, in a low voice, as if to try to make me forget the indiscreet remark she has let drop concerning her mother.

" I want you to be particularly nice to her," says she. " I'm very fond of Blanchette."

4. *" La chanson,"* whispers Cunégonde, *" c'est très jolie, mais très triste! "*

I nod acquiescence. It is a pretty song, but it is also, as Cunégonde says, a sad song. Indeed, there is an unusual quality of sadness in that song, in the timbre of that mysteriously vibrant voice. A haunting, ineffable *tristesse,* like the distant note of a bird at twilight, the mellowest hour of the day. A sadness that is poignantly personal; not the defeatist sadness of resignation, nor of self-pity, but the sadness of one who dares to hope.

" Voici mon coeur, qui veut m'aimer
J'ai soif d'amour. . . .
Mon Dieu! — comme je suis désolé
Car j'ai soif d'amour! "

The sweet, sad melody floats out into the soft night, and melts into the moonlight. Sinks, somehow, into the sentimental, emotional soil of my heart, obscurely. Even in that moment of absorption, I realize that, and wonder why. It is very disquieting to be analytical, at times.

Cunégonde enters the music room through the half-opened French window, and motions to me to follow. Strangely excited, for no reason I can discover, I follow.

5. The music room is rather enshadowed. Only one great silver candelabrum is burning, close to the massive pianoforte, and silhouetted by the gentle chiaroscuros of the flickering candle-light, I see the back of Madame Caillot's head, then, the outline of a slender form. She is playing softly, as she sings, and evidently is unaware of our presence, only a few feet behind her. The soft pile of the carpet is deep, and our footsteps noiseless. Cunégonde touches my sleeve, and I pause. Together we stand there — immobile, silent.

The candle-light falls on the ivory and ebony of the keys, and of a sudden I see her hands, themselves creamy ivory. They are long, slim hands, with long, slim fingers, yet not too long; and the wrists, as I later discover the ankles, too, to be, are the small wrists and ankles of a patrician.

I stare at Madame Caillot's hands. They are the most expressive, the most *living* hands I have ever seen. Without ever having touched them, I know that they are warm and soft, yet firm in a clasp . . .

there is strength in those hands, strength and imagination and a sense of beauty. They are artist's hands. And as I still stare, while they wander languidly over the keys, I realize that there is one more quality those stranger hands hold; a quality of the skin rather than of the hand. This is the quality of sensuousness.

"Sensuous" is a blond word, just as "sensual" is a brunette word; a queer fantasy, that, perhaps, but my own, and ineradicable. I would call a dark Italian or Spaniard of unusual voluptuousness of physical charm, sensual. Yet I might also call a Nordic blonde sensual, for by that I mean that there is something in her physical personality, her temperamental make-up, which is eloquent of sex, holding an overpowering appeal to the physical senses. But the word sensuous I would apply, in the same way, to either blonde or brunette, but for a quite different reason. The sensuous personality, is primarily, one whose essence, of course, is also physical in its appeal. But this type is more feminine than the other, in a subtler, finer way.

These women — and they are few and far between, although by no means rare — have a soft, milky skin, almost like that of a baby in texture. There is a queer magic, an amazing potency in that skin, much as if it possesses a personality of its own, quite individual from the person it encases. It is a skin which draws the masculine gaze like a magnet draws irresponsible bits of iron. And like a magnet, it is fairly electric with potentialities.

Enwebbed by the sweet sadness of the music,

fascinated by Blanchette Caillot's hands, I stand there beside Cunégonde, and listen. And as I do, peculiarly, I glance down at Cunégonde's hands. They are rather large, and even masterful. For the first time I am aware that all along I have not really liked her hands, but never admitted the thought, even to myself.

Guiltily, yet helpless to resist the temptation, I steal a glance at Cunégonde's profile. She has her father's strong, rather stubborn, acquisitive chin, and her mother's well-arched, dominant nose. Again, for the first time, I realize that I have never really cared for that type of chin and nose in the abstract. For a moment I grow analytical, again. If I can be so critical of Cunégonde, can I really be in love with her? I think the matter over carefully, all in the space of a split instant. Yes, I love Cunégonde. I am certain of it.

My eyes return, entranced, to the magic hands on the keys, and my attention to the hauntingly reminiscent voice whose peculiar timbre so obscurely disturbs me.

Cunégonde touches me.

"*Fort joli* . . ." she murmurs.

Yes, the song is very pretty. But what is it she is singing? Why that ever-recurring refrain? I listen, and the significance of the words suddenly strike home . . . the haunting repetition of "*I am hungry for love*" . . .

Like a man under a spell, I listen.

". . . *J'ai soif d'amour!*"

6. The spell is broken. The song ended.

Cunégonde is introducing us.

As Madame Caillot turns, undeniably startled, I bow, very low, so do not get the initial reaction on her face at the sight of us.

"*Ravissante,* Blanchette! . . ." enthuses Cunégonde. "May I present Monsieur Temple Franklin?"

"*Enchanté!*" I murmur, and look up, just in time to see her eyes widen in surprise, as she stands. They are very blue, her eyes — a deep, crinkly, positive blue whose depth and blueness is fairly breath-taking. She is neither tall nor short, but is very slim, rather high-breasted, and exquisitely proportioned. Her lips are neither thin nor too thick, but soft and rather full, and the upper lip is imperceptibly short. Her nose is straight, and so perfectly moulded that it takes one's attention immediately; there are few women so fortunate as to have such a strikingly beautiful set of features as Blanchette Caillot's blue eyes and sculptured nose. Her mouth and chin and girlish bust are superb, but the nose and eyes are unusual. It is all I can do to keep from staring like any gawk.

"So this is Dr. Franklin's grandson about whom I've heard so much," says Madame Caillot, with an odd little smile, and as she smiles, I discover that she dimples, and there is a mocking light in her eyes. It is a most enchanting dimple, that, and an uncertain, for it goes and comes without the slightest warning. But at the moment I am more acutely aware of the

look in her eyes. There is a challenge in their blue depths whose meaning I cannot divine, and a mockery which is most disturbing. We measure glances, lightly, but firmly, as two fencers click together their foils, and of a sudden a realization comes over me — almost a certainty. I suddenly smile, and to my surprise, she looks rather startled, as if she has discovered that I know what I know. . . .

"This is Temple," says Cunégonde, and there is possession in her voice — that tone which all women use when displaying their men (lovers, or even mere admirers) to another woman. Curiously enough, although ordinarily I would delight in the thought of Cunégonde flaunting me as her property, at this moment it arouses within me a queer resentment. "I want you to know Temple, Blanchette. I want you to be friends."

"I am sure we will be — friends," says Blanchette Caillot, politely, but with a touch of amusement lurking behind. "Dr. Franklin talks of you so often, Monsieur. He is very proud of his grandson. . . ."

"You are most kind to say so, Madame," I bow in acknowledgement. "I am even more proud of my grandfather." I study her with interest. "Isn't it odd that we've never met before — being such close neighbours? Your house, I believe, Madame Caillot, is only a stone's-throw from the Hôtel de Valentinois."

"It is our misfortune, Monsieur," says Blanchette, demurely, "that you are so seldom at home when Dr. Franklin calls, so that you cannot accom-

pany him. No doubt there are stronger attractions in Paris."

"No *doubt!*" puts in Cunégonde, with meaning. "The ladies of Passy cannot hope to compete with the ladies of Versailles, for Monsieur Temple's favour. . . ."

"I surrender!" I admit, feelingly. "Unconditional surrender. No compliment that I might offer, I fear, could excuse my inexcusable neglect. Henceforth I do not stir a step from Passy. Neighbourliness begins at home!"

"The ladies of Passy are honoured," says Blanchette, wickedly dimpling. "I fear me that they do not deserve such high honour, Monsieur!"

"*Attendez!*" Cunégonde intervenes. "I want you to be friends, you two. Why these painstaking insults?"

"Insults?" I demand, in affected surprise. "Why, Cunégonde! I am prostrate at Madame's feet. . . ."

"Quite prostrate," avers Blanchette. "The position is not fitting to so gallant and popular a gentleman. Do arise again, Monsieur!"

Cunégonde looks from one to the other of us, a bit puzzled as we are both equally unsmiling.

"*C'est terrible!*" says she. "I can never tell when either of you are serious — you two! Do stop quarrelling and be friends!"

"An armistice!" I declare. "But only upon the condition that Madame Caillot forgive my neglect of the past, and allow me to call *chez Caillot* in the

near future — with Dr. Franklin or without — to attempt to make amends."

"Granted," sweetly. "But I'm afraid there is little amusement an old married woman can offer a popular young bachelor, Monsieur Franklin. You are forgiven — and absolved of any amends."

"'Old married woman'!" scoffs Cunégonde. "You'd think Blanchette was sixty instead of only twenty-six!"

"That remark," says Blanchette with mock gravity, "was a blunder of the first degree. Here I had set my heart on the conquest of your Temple, Cunégonde, and you spoil it at the start! *Vraiment,* I believe you're jealous!"

"He's not *my* Temple," asserts Cunégonde, colouring despite herself, and tossing her head. "He's the Temple of too many other girls. . . ."

"Thank you," and I bow. "*Merci beaucoup!*"

"If you think I'm jealous," continues Cunégonde, "you're mistaken. You can have your impolite neighbour, and welcome!"

"*Merci bien,*" and Blanchette drops a curtsey. "Thank *you,* Cunégonde. You overwhelm me!"

Suddenly we all laugh.

"There are some delicious ices in the kitchens," says Cunégonde. "It's warm, and I know you'd like some. Continue your war — you two — while I see about them. Dr. Franklin adores *madame ma mère's* ices!"

She crosses to the door, hesitates a moment, and

looks back at us, smiling, her gaze darting from me to Blanchette, and back to me again.

Of a sudden she throws us a kiss — which naturally I take it is meant for me — and is gone.

We two are left facing each other, there in the candle-light. Blanchette Caillot and myself.

For a long moment it is very silent in the music room . . . we are both very silent. And there is a queer tension in the air.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

Concerning A Catechism By Moonlight And A Decision By Moon-Stroke

WE REGARD each other, like two fencers standing *en garde,* our brandished glances for foils.

"I prefer to fight my battles in the open, personally," I volunteer. "Suppose we continue the engagement on the terrace?"

Blanchette merely nods, gathers up her skirts, and walks out onto the moonlit terrace, and I follow. By the light of the moon she is a disturbingly beautiful sight, this Blanchette Caillot who is my neighbour.

"What a pretty moon!" says she.

"A most superior moon," I agree. "Just made for verbal bloodshed. . . ."

"Not to mention skirmishes in *amour,*" she muses, artlessly. "More for the latter, I presume."

"So you did see us!" I regard her, not surprised. "I thought you had, the moment I saw you look at me, in there. Aren't you quite ashamed of yourself?"

"For looking on? Not at all. It was a very romantic spectacle. I adore romantic spectacles."

I think of the gushing French marquise, who, during our War of Independence, commented to Grandfather on what a beautiful spectacle America was giving the world. And his dry answer that it was a beautiful show, indeed, but that the spectators were not paying to see it. . . .

"I hope you enjoyed the spectacle," I tell her. "If I had known we had an audience, perhaps I would have been more careful with my technique." I am annoyed, and perhaps show it.

"I enjoyed it very much, vicariously, of course," says this candid lady. "That's why women always take such interest in other people's love affairs; they imagine themselves in the other woman's place, and thus get a vicarious thrill."

"You intrigue me, strangely. . . ." I drawl. "I am complimented, indeed, if you imagined yourself in my arms, even for the barest instant!"

A curious expression flits across her face, and is gone.

"I should hardly think so; I should say that you have held too many women in your arms to be interested in the thought of a ghost-lady," coolly. "I'll wager you can't remember how many, yourself?"

"Are you after information, or merely gathering statistics?"

"Neither. I'm only trying to annoy you."

"Why?"

"Don't ask me. I might be dangerously frank."

"You don't like me," I decide. "I wish you'd really tell me why. I like you, tremendously. With reservations, of course!"

She drops me a curtsey.

"Even a qualified compliment is a compliment. . . . I didn't say I didn't like you. You mustn't jump at conclusions."

"Then what do you mean?"

"I mean," says Blanchette, very lovely and impersonal in the moonlight, "that I don't approve of you. Not in the least."

"*Bon!* We're getting somewhere at last! And why don't you approve of me, fair lady?"

"Because you're a very conceited young man," she tells me, obligingly. "Charming, and even rather handsome, but undeniably very conceited. Still, I don't suppose you can help that. Most charming, handsome young bachelors — particularly spoiled ones, like yourself — are conceited."

"Thank you for the extravagant adjectives," I return, "but I beg to disagree with you."

"You *would!*" says she. "Which proves my contention."

"You misunderstand me," I go on, earnestly. "I have vanity, perhaps, but not, I hope, conceit. They are two different things. A man is as big as his vanity — that is, as big as the confidence he actually has in himself. But —"

"*Voilà!* So that is it! *Eh, bien* — I agree with you, Monsieur Temple. You are a very confident young man!"

"You gathered that from — observation — I presume?"

"From observation? But certainly! How else?" She suddenly pauses, as if catching herself. With feminine guile, all gravity, of a sudden, she turns the subject. "Tell me, Monsieur . . . may I ask you a personal question?"

"That is ever a lady's privilege, madame."

"Are you in love with Cunégonde Brillon?" And as, somewhat taken aback, I do not answer at once: "A kiss in a garden on a moonlight night is one thing, *mon ami*. But being in love is another . . . come — if you tell me the truth, perhaps I can help you."

"Why should you want to help someone of whom you so heartily disapprove?" I want to know.

"Women are born match-makers," says my lady. "Besides, I think marriage might be good for you."

"Madame chooses to anticipate. . . ." I murmur. *"N'est-ce pas?"*

"Cunégonde is a gentlewoman," says Blanchette, simply. "And her mother is your Grandfather's friend."

"I beg your pardon!" rather coldly. "It is quite unnecessary to remind me of either of those facts."

Again she dimples, and there is no resisting the charm of her. For the first time I really begin to notice the peculiarly sad quality of her smile; to notice that she smiles with her eyes as well.

"Perhaps you think me impertinent, and rightly," says she. "But I am very fond of Cunégonde, you see. I should not like to see her hurt."

"Why do you say that?"

She looks at me soberly.

"Cunégonde is in love with you — or thinks she is. Young girls are inclined to take first love more seriously, perhaps, than any other. Cunégonde, particularly, is, like her mother, high-strung and rather

temperamental. She would take a disappointment in love very seriously . . . if she *were* in love."

My pride, of course, is touched.

"She *is* in love, I am proud to say. And I love her very much. Hurting her is the last thing in the world I should like to do to her."

"I wonder . . ." she muses, frankly.

"That is your privilege!" say I, very stiffly.

Again that half-mocking, half-sad smile.

"You must not be angry with me, Temple — may I call you Temple? — because, as I said, I am very fond of Cunégonde. But I am afraid you misunderstand me. Men are so dense! It is not that I think you would hurt her, wittingly, you see — but that you might, without meaning to do so."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because, frankly — being what you are, you are a very fickle young man. A fickle man may make a neglectful husband. Neglectful husbands — " she adds thoughtfully — and, remembering what Cunégonde had said of Monsieur Caillot, I soon catch her drift — "are not very pleasant for a woman to have."

"Why do you say I'm fickle?"

"Aren't you?" quietly, with steady eyes.

I drop my own.

"Perhaps. All men are more or less fickle. But I shall be faithful to the woman I marry, because I shall marry the woman I love. In America, you see, we have very queer customs: we usually marry for love."

"I had heard that," says Blanchette, and there is a wistful note in her voice. "But they say yours is a very primitive country. With progress, and the advance of culture and the amenities, it may change. And then, perhaps, you will marry for other things than love, as we do here, in France."

Intrigued, I grow thoughtful.

"Perhaps, but I think not. We are a liberty-loving people, we Americans — an informal, natural, very human sort of people. We want to be free to govern ourselves, not to be governed by a parent country, and in the same way, we want to be free to choose our own wives, not have them chosen for us by our elders. We are a young, vigorous people, and, like all young people, have ideals and illusions. But they are such very pleasant ideals and illusions that we do not care to lose them; so, setting a new fashion in nations, we intend to go on keeping our extravagant ideals and illusions, and being extravagantly sentimental — and that's why some day we shall be the greatest nation on earth!"

"Bravo!" cries Blanchette, sincerely. "Almost you convert me to go to live in America among the red savages!"

"Forgive the outburst. But nevertheless it is what I believe — and it is true."

"And I honour you for it," says Blanchette gravely. "All France honours your countrymen for their ideals and their courage — just as all France loves and honours Dr. Franklin, the Apostle of liberty and the benefactor of Man." She repeats a

currently popular phrase: "The man who has wrested the lightning from the skies and the sceptres from the tyrants!" And the dimple reappears. "But we were speaking of you and Cunégonde. . . ."

"And you have decided that I am quite an unfit person for Cunégonde!"

"I did not say that at all!" she protests. "I merely believe that you are a fickle, flirtatious person. But you are young, and that phase may pass."

"You are most kind, Madame!" and I bow low.

"And you are most absurd, Monsieur!" she ripostes. "But then we are being ridiculous, out here in the moonlight. We have both said things which I am sure we shall both regret. Let's make the moon the scape-goat, and say we were bewitched by the night. . . ."

"Better still," I suggest, "we have been the victims of a moon-stroke. For there are moon-strokes, as well as sun-strokes, you know! And what has been said under the influence of the moon, is often easily forgotten."

"And that," puts in Blanchette, with a quaint grimace, "is just what I fear, in you. What you tell Cunégonde in the moonlight, you may easily forget by day — or even upon another night — if it rains!"

At her last words my mind suddenly flies back to that night of rain and romance — the night of the adventure of the sedan chair.

"There is romance in a rainy night, too —" I observe, apropos of my thoughts.

"You should know, Monsieur! . . ." remarks Blanchette, innocently, and then her hand flies to her mouth so quickly that I know she has regretted the speech.

"You seem to know a great deal about me — and my romantic activities," I let drop, rather vexed. "What a hotbed of gossip Paris is!"

"I never listen to gossip," she returns, colouring. And a cryptic little smile comes to her lips. "I have a — a friend — who recently had a very odd adventure on a rainy night."

I look at her, without saying anything. The faintest premonition of what is to come however, stirs me.

"She was returning home from a *bal masqué* — in a sedan chair . . ." and she looks me straight in the eyes.

It is my turn to colour, now, and painfully.

"So you know her? — Who she really was?" I ask. And a great embarrassment comes over me, as I try to remember some of the things I said, to the strange masque, that eventful night. "Would you — could you tell me, Madame?"

"I could," says she, mischievously. "But I won't. It would be perhaps to betray a confidence."

"Oh!" rather blankly. My thoughts are in sudden chaos. What could the mystery woman have told her? "I can explain the whole affair — everything!"

"Ah, oui?" says my lady, innocently.

"Everything!" I continue, desperately. "You see — the whole business was a ghastly mistake! I —

we — thought it was someone else, my friends and I. You see, we drew lots to see who'd kidnap a certain young woman of the theatre, in order to annoy her protector — a certain distinguished nobleman who has made himself obnoxious to all of us."

"And you were the lucky man?"

"I was the *unlucky* man," I interject, unhappily. "*How* unlucky — I am just beginning to realize!"

"You perhaps made to this strange lady some indiscreet remarks, mistaken as you were in her identity?"

Bits of the conversation that night come back to me. I am highly uncomfortable, and know that she knows it, which makes me more so.

"You might call some of them indiscreet, under the circumstances."

"You made personal remarks, *peut-être?* You accused her of marrying an old man for his money? You, see, my friend has told me everything. You may as well be frank!"

"Perhaps I did," I admit. "But it was in the belief, of course, that this — lady — was the mistress of this certain person — who is both old and disagreeable, and rich. But," I continue, "I seemed to have shot that arrow at a true target — if the reactions of the lady on my lap was any criterion."

"*Ah, oui?*" comments Blanchette, uncertainly, and I wonder why she bites her lip. Then, hastily: "But my friend tells me that you were also kind enough to advise her to take a lover . . . a young man, by choice."

"Oh, yes?" I return, in much her own previous manner. And again, politely: "Oh, yes?"

"Someone — she tells me you told her — someone who still had illusions about love and women and romance. Someone, if I remember her words correctly, who would worship her — offer adoration at her feet, as to a goddess in a shrine." She looks at me, innocently. "My friend seems to have gotten the impression that you would not have been averse to have volunteered filling that paragon of lovers' shoes, yourself." And as, crushed, I do not answer: "Perhaps Cunégonde would not object to your carrying out that philanthropic purpose, in the event that you were to become her husband?"

There is nothing to say, and I say it, eloquently. In this moment I hate Blanchette Caillot with all the vigorous, unadulterated hate at my command. Or think I do. Woman-like, she is enjoying the situation; it is pleasant to any woman to see a man figuratively squirm, particularly if the squirming is of her own instigation. And so Blanchette Caillot, being a woman, oversteps herself.

"Since you are so devoted to Cunégonde, Monsieur Temple — perhaps it is best that she does not know these things from my friend, for, being young and inexperienced in the ways of the world, she would not understand her lover's making love to another woman. . . ." She continues her quotations of the indiscretions of one Temple Franklin, diplomat, that accursed night with dramatic gestures. "'Someone, beautiful lady, to whom you can give

the precious treasure that is your heart!'" She looks at me with interest. "I hope you didn't use the same phrases with Cunégonde . . . if she ever found out, she might not like it!"

A sudden thought paralyses my mind. I step closer to her, there at the stone balustrade of the terrace, and of a sudden get the faintest wisp of a haunting perfume . . . I stare at her, in amaze, and as I stare, I remember that other perfume, and begin to compare that huskily musical whisper in the sedan chair, and this huskily musical voice in the moonlight of an island in the Seine.

Of a sudden, beyond possibility of a doubt, I know. And knowing, am conscious that instead of anger or embarrassment, I feel a curious excitement, a heady elation that is as potent as a lovingly aged wine.

I stand there, silent and incredulous and amazed in the moonlight, looking at this Blanchette Caillot of the disconcerting eyes, and she suddenly stops smiling and, shy as any schoolgirl, looks away toward the garden and the Seine. She is only too plainly vexed with herself.

"So it was you," I say, slowly, and begin to smile, despite myself. "*You* are the lady of the mask — the lady who sat in my arms!"

"Please . . . !" says Blanchette, very low. A new Blanchette. "I'm sorry I teased you so — but I couldn't resist it."

"And you are the lady to whom I made those so-indiscreet remarks!" I marvel, wondering at the

coincidental faculties of life. "And you are Cunégonde's friend! It is unbelievable — unnatural. Things like that only happen in books and plays that men invent!" Yet I know, even then, that I am wrong. The actual coincidences of real life are usually so incredible that no author would dare put them into fiction, for fear of not being believed. Life is like that.

"You have nothing to fear," says Blanchette. "I have said nothing — and shall say nothing — to Cunégonde. On the contrary, I shall help you, if you would like me to. But only, of course, on the condition that you give me your word you really love her, and want her for yours, for always."

I am about to emphatically affirm my love for Cunégonde in no uncertain terms, when an inexplicable something glues my tongue to the roof of my mouth. In that instant there is a fleeting doubt in my mind — an uncertainty.

As she looks at me, waiting for my answer, voices are heard from within the house. Cunégonde's, and Monsieur Caillot's. Each, separately, and then together, suddenly fire me to a queer sense of resentment.

"If you'll forgive me," I tell her, rather tensely, but stiffly, too, "I prefer conducting my affairs in my own way. If I am fortunate enough to win Cunégonde, the winning shall be my own — as shall be the losing. I want no assistance. You are kind to make the offer; *non, merci!*"

And with the most formal bow in my repertoire,

I stride off into the garden, as Blanchette looks after me with startled eyes.

7. For a long time I wander about the gardens of *Moulin Joli* with restless steps, full of an unreasonable anger against them all — against Blanchette, her husband, and even Cunégonde. And myself, of course, most of all.

The lady in the moon is still preening herself in the Seine, and the Stair of a Hundred Steps rises majestically above the great lawn, peopled now only with ghosts. Oddly enough, most of my thoughts are not on that stair and the moonlight and Cunégonde, whom I love, but, on the contrary, are back in the perfumed little world of the sedan chair, hurrying along through a pouring rain, as a soft figure lies, protesting, in my arms. A figure that I most cordially hate.

Still loving the one, and hating the other, it is a long time before I return to the house.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

Of Our Lady Of Auteuil And The House Of A Thousand Sofas

THE days pass, and the weeks, each fuller and busier than that preceding it, so that I have seldom time to think of the progress of my affair with Cunégonde, much less of this Blanchette Caillot. I see Cunégonde frequently, of course, for I am usually with Grandfather on his visits to the Brillons. But I see nothing of Madame Caillot at all. Yet, strange to relate, the image of Blanchette is often stronger in my mind than the image of Cunégonde, of whom I see so much. The veiled antagonism of her — the mocking blue eyes and the sadly scornful mouth — are hard to get out of my memory. Indeed, her face pops up before my mind's eye at the most unexpected moments; it is almost uncanny.

We go out often, Grandfather and I, for Dr. Franklin, particularly, is a great favourite with the ladies. And the legion known as "Franklin's Flirts" is famous.

There are the Princess Sapieha and Sangusko, and Princess Dashkowa — or Princess "Dashka," one of his favourites. Marie Antoinette, the Queen, often has him explain physics to her, he rides with Madame Bertin, the Chancellor's niece, and plays chess with the Duchesse de Bourbon. Comtesse Golofkin sings "God of Love" for him; she flirts quite expertly with Grandfather, but she has

always loved the adventurous Lovelace, who went off to the wars in America, during our fight for Independence. . . . News of every battle brought her flying to us to find out if he were killed or wounded. And then there is Madame Conway, and Madame Dutartre, not to mention Comtesse d'Houdetot, who gave that famous *fête champêtre* in his honour several years ago. When the Comtesse was simply Sophie Lalive, she had been the beloved of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who immortalized her in one of his "Confessions"; the fête she gave for Grandfather on her estate in Sannois is still remembered, for it was at once the talk and the derision of Paris . . . the Comtesse and her guests wrote and read impromptu verses in Grandfather's honour, had him plant a Virginia locust with a marble inscription, and treated him like a god descended from Olympus, in general.

One and all, they love to sit on the arms of his chair, and his lap, and have him kiss their necks and pay them compliments. The husbands seldom object, only it is true that one — whose name perhaps is best unmentioned — has given his infatuated wife a present of a *vase de nuit,* in the bottom of which is stamped Dr. Franklin's face! Paul Jones and I often chaff Grandfather with that story, but, as always, he takes it in good nature . . . nothing ever disconcerts him!

2. Franklin's Flirts . . . !

There is Madame Brillon. And there is Madame

Helvétius. These two, each of whom he truly loves, head the list indisputably. But it is odd how his affection for the pair differs, for, whereas he treats Madame Brillon as does a father, Madame Helvétius treats him like a son. Which, perhaps, is fitting enough. Madame Brillon is well under forty, and Madame Helvétius well over sixty-five . . . and although Grandfather is eighty, no man is ever too old to be babied by a woman.

The contrast between the two is striking. Madame Brillon is beautiful, sensitive, and exquisite in her tastes. Madame Helvétius, although it is said that she was very beautiful in her youth, when she was one of the noted Lignivilles of Lorraine, is now far from beautiful. She has moles and wrinkles, often passes a day without washing her face, and has the manners of a peasant. Mrs. John Adams, who met her here several years ago, cordially detested her, and was fond of quoting a feminine French friend who somewhat maliciously compares Madame Helvétius to the ruins of Palmyra. For that matter, few women like her, but most men do, and her salon is the most interesting, perhaps, in all Paris.

The importance of the salon in France as an institution can hardly be estimated. Where in the last reign, and even that of Louis the Sun-King, the meeting-places of the best minds were invariably in the cafés — several of which became world-famous for that very reason — the modern meeting-place is the salon. And more important still, where in the old cafés public opinion was born and grew to its

present inestimable power, today public opinion is created and issues its dictum from the salons of Paris. No longer are reputations — literary, political or social — made in the City or at Versailles. It is at the great salons of the town, and not always in the salons of the higher nobility, either, but even in those of the intellectual *bourgeoisie;* the famous Madame Geoffrin, who entertained Walpole and Diderot and St. Beuve and innumerable other celebrities, is a case in point.

One reason why I love this France so, as does Grandfather, is because it is the one country in the world which values art at its true worth, and gives it its due. Institutions are monarchical in name, but habits have become republican. All posts and offices are still the prerogative of certain castes, but outside official circles the spirit of equality is everywhere.

It cannot be denied that the great authors are the really great men of France today, for it is they who gradually come to guide public opinion, and their greatness is more instantly recognized even than that of rank. Literary fame sometimes even outshines the most ancient of titles — an unimaginable possibility fifty years ago — and not only do men of genius receive the homage that is their due, but even second- or third-rate men of letters are treated with more distinction than the provincial nobility.

For the first time in history the great nobles and the intellectuals are meeting on neutral ground, and beginning to understand each other. Because of this,

the latter are shedding their bookishness and acquiring a new urbanity and sophistication, and the former are losing their prejudices against science and knowledge, and gaining a greater tolerance and understanding. Genius nowadays counts as much as a title, and the tribunal of public opinion is more feared than ever was that of an absolute monarch. This is why, perhaps, Paris is indubitably the crossroads of the world, and the fountain-head of world thought. And it is indirectly for this reason that France came to help America gain her independence from England; why our similarity of ideals, our mutual love of liberty and equality, shall hold us close in the bonds of eternal friendship and brotherhood. . . .

As I have said, Madame Helvétius' salon is one of the most interesting in Paris, which is fitting, when one considers that she is the widow of Claude Adrien Helvétius, the philosopher. The theory of Helvétius — *De l'Esprit,* published, I believe, in 1758 — concerning the equality of man, has served as a foundation for a new political philosophy; a metaphysical philosophy, naturally, since he was a metaphysician. He believed that genius and intelligence were the products of education. His doctrine of the potency of education, and the comparative importance of heredity has brought into being an entire new school of thought.

It is easily to be seen, in monarchical France, that the ideas of absolute monarchy and hereditary aristocracy are threadbare. The *nouveaux enrichis* and

the educated middle classes are asking — and getting — a share in the government. It is odd that Grandfather, who comes from the land of liberty, discusses this theory of Helvétius as an abstract principle alone, instead of with any partisan warmth. On that point we differ, Grandfather and I. It may be impertinence to so express myself, but I believe that I can see farther ahead. Grandfather, after all his sacrifices in the cause of freedom, is still a conservative. When I reach his age perhaps I will be conservative, too; after all, youth is invariably hot-headed in the pursuit of new gods. . . .

To return to Madame Helvétius, however, we all call her "Our Lady of Auteuil," and in our set her house is known as "the Academy," or House of a Thousand Sofas. You can hardly walk in any of her rooms without stumbling over one of her vast number of sofas, cats or dogs. Poupon, her pet cat, is her constant companion, and she is forever kissing it, when she isn't kissing Grandfather Franklin — (who is, *en passant,* perhaps the most kissed man in all France!). Not that Grandfather minds in the least. He is so fond of Madame Helvétius that he once wanted to marry her. And his admiration for her isn't hard to understand, after all. For Madame Helvétius, even if she doesn't realize that she is no longer young — and is inordinately vain, and illiterate, to boot — yet has a strong character, a keen wit, a warm heart, and a refreshing sense of humour.

Before she married Helvétius, she was in love

with Turgot. But she had no dowry, and Turgot, although of distinguished birth and with a brilliant, sensitive mind, was practically penniless, so they reasoned themselves out of the idea, both being intelligent, sane people. Instead, she married Helvétius, who left her a fortune he made as a Farmers-general. His income was said to be three hundred thousand francs a year, and he bought her the handsome house of Quentin de la Tour, painter to the King. She and Turgot continued to be close friends, and when her husband died, Turgot wanted to marry her, but this time she refused, declaring it would spoil their friendship!

She now lives in Auteuil surrounded by her eighteen cats, ten dogs, a number of birds, philosophers, monks — one of these, the Abbé Morellêt, lives there — and Masons. Often the entire Nine Sisters Lodge — which Helvétius founded, and of which Grandfather is now the Grand Master — meets in her house. She adores Grandfather, as do all the French, for his reserve and his irony, for his gallantry and his optimism. And, above all, for his gift of social ease, to which all French women aspire, and which they admire most in their men.

It is no more than true to admit here that Dr. Franklin is one of the few Americans the French do like, principally, perhaps, because he is one of the few they understand. We are, after all, provincial colonists, and very British in our manners; energetic and intelligent, of course, but undeniably crude in

many respects, and capable of appearing in quite an absurd light in French society, which is still the formal, precise society of Louis XIV. To be frank, the French have detested everyone whom our country has sent to them, except Dr. Franklin. They snubbed Adams, laughed at Izard, only tolerated Deane, and despised Lee — rightly — as a stupid boor who knew no better than to abuse French customs in the presence of his servants, which was spread by the latter all over Paris.

Grandfather Franklin, however, they adore, and many verily believe that several centuries back our ancestors were French, and spelt their name "Franquelin." This, perhaps, is because he is so like the French in many ways; they see in him their own shrewdness, economy, philosophy, and love of life. They love his anecdotes and the reports of his *affaires*. They like him because he is thrifty, responsible, and deliberate. And his paganism gives the French, who are only external Christians, a delicious shock.

It is odd, too, how Grandfather is popular with all classes. Everyone has read *Poor Richard,* and his lightning-rods are in general use. The followers of Voltaire declare he is a Voltairian, and those of Rousseau — whose syrupy sentimentality fairly pervades French thought — that he is a Rousseauist. To him is generally accredited the success of the American Revolution, and in him they see the personification of liberty. His popularity is really amazing, so idolatrous is it.

3. The story of Grandfather's romance with Madame Helvétius is rather amusing.

One day, three or four years ago, he suddenly proposed to her. She was so overwhelmed, that she could not answer, but mutely showed him the little plaster model of her husband's tomb — a woman weeping over a funeral urn — as if in reproach. He was too wise to take this as a final answer, and that night he wrote his famous apology, his *Descent To Hell.*

Madame Helvétius was touched, and promised to think the proposal over. She then drove to see Turgot, who was down with the gout, and asked his advice. He was both shocked and upset at the idea, warned her vehemently against it, and made her blush as he suggested the possible consequences of this union of sixty-five and eighty — of October and December. In addition, he warned her that if she married Grandfather, she would — for some inexplicable reason — lose her salon. This decided her. She could not do without her innumerable friends, who came to the "Academy" to talk literature and philosophy, not to mention love. So she gently refused Grandfather, and fed him an extra helping of whipped cream, with which she was accustomed to gorge both him and her perpetual house-guest, the Abbé Morellêt.

Thenceforward they were merely close friends. And not long after, Grandfather met Madame Brillon, for whom he has formed perhaps the strongest attachment he has ever had in his life.

Which does not offend me in the least, since it will doubtless help my suit for Cunégonde.

By a coincidence, it is at Madame Helvétius' that I run into Blanchette Caillot again.

I have arrived rather later than Grandfather, and find him enthroned in his special chair, upon which the Abbé Morellêt has engraved *B F hic sedebat*—*"Here sat B F."* The physician Cabanis is there, and the noted Condorcet, and de la Roche, and a score of others, not to mention Turgot and young Lafayette, very elegant, and wearing the presentation sword Grandfather had given him on behalf of the United States, with its inscription *E Pluribus Unum,* taken from Virgil's *Moretum,* and here, too, is Blanchette, with Madame Brillon.

Grandfather, as usual, is the center of attention, and as I arrive, I find, oddly enough, that he is repeating, for the amusement of the assembled company, the text of his letter to Madame Helvétius, on his *Descent Into Hell.* He has a prodigious memory, has Dr. Franklin, and no reticences at all in regard to his past affair. Madame Helvétius herself seems to consider it all a huge joke, and is rather proud of her elderly gallant's gesture, since it is a compliment to her. She sits on his knee, an arm around his neck. Just as I enter the room, he begins to recite it, the enigmatic smile playing on his face, all the while:

"Mortified at the barbarous resolution pronounced by you so positively yesterday evening, that you would remain single the rest of your life as a com-

pliment due to the memory of your husband, I retired to my chamber. Throwing myself upon my bed, I dreamt I was dead, and was transported to the Elysian Fields.

"I was asked whether I wished to see anyone in particular; to which I replied that I wished to see the philosophers. 'There are two who live here at hand in this garden; they are good neighbors, and very friendly towards one another.'—'Who are they?'—'Socrates and Helvétius.'—'I esteem them both highly; but let me see Helvétius first, because I understand a little French, but not a word of Greek.' I was conducted to him; he received me with much courtesy, having known me, he said, by character, some time past. He asked me a thousand questions relative to the war, the present state of religion, of liberty, of the government of France.

"'You do not inquire, then,' said I, 'after your dear friend, Madame Helvétius; yet she loves you exceedingly. I was in her company not more than an hour ago.'—'Ah,' said he, 'you make me recur to my past happiness, which ought to be forgotten in order to be happy here. For many years I could think of nothing but her, though at length I am consoled. I have taken another wife, the most like her that I could find; she is not indeed altogether so handsome, but she has a great fund of wit and good sense, and her whole study is to please me. She is at this moment gone to fetch the best nectar and ambrosia to regale me; stay here awhile and you will see her.'

"'I perceive,' said I, 'that your former friend is

more faithful to you than you are to her; she has had several good offers, but has refused them all. I will confess to you that I love her extremely; but she was cruel to me, and rejected me peremptorily for your sake.'

"'I pity you sincerely,' said he, 'for she is an excellent woman, handsome and amiable.' . . . As he finished these words the new Madame Helvétius entered with the nectar, and I recognized her immediately as my former American friend, Mrs. Franklin! I reclaimed her, but she answered me coldly: I was a good wife to you for forty-nine years and four months — nearly half a century. Let that content you. I have formed a new connection here, which will last to eternity.'

"Indignant at this refusal of my Eurydice, I immediately resolved to quit those ungrateful shades, and return to this good world again, to behold the sun and you! Here I am; let us avenge *ourselves!"*

There is a general peal of laughter, as he ends, and Madame Helvétius kissed Grandfather twice on the forehead, and once on either cheek. He beams, benignantly.

"Tonnerre de Dieu!" exclaims Cabanis. "How could you resist such an appeal, Madame?"

"Because Franklin is an old rogue — a *coquin* —" retorts Madame Helvétius, "and I am afraid that I would meet too many of his other wives in Paradise!"

"Not only has she refused me on earth, but she has also refused me in Heaven!" puts in Grand-

father, imperturbably, and turns to Madame Brillon, who is listening indulgently. "You, at least, Daughter, won't be so cruel!"

Madame Brillon glances mischievously at her friend Madame Helvétius, and smiles.

"I give you my word of honour that I will be your wife in Paradise, on condition that you do not ogle the maidens too much while waiting for me!"

There is another laugh.

"Marriage — marriage!" puts in Turgot. He has a full face, a high forehead, and a petulant, almost womanish, mouth. "Let's discuss something more pleasant!"

"There is no state in existence more pleasant!" Grandfather fires up, at once, perhaps as the wily Turgot intends him to do. "No young man should live and die in celibacy. The wheel of life that has rolled down to him from Adam without interruption should not stop with him. I would not have one dead unbearing branch in the genealogical tree of the Franklins. The marriage state is, after all our jokes, the happiest!"

"Of course it is!" says Madame Helvétius, briskly, and the Countess de Maurepas, who is also present, seconds her warmly. Madame Brillon and Blanchette Caillot, I notice, however, make no comment at all. Nor do they look at each other, and I guess immediately that there are few secrets between them. "All young people should marry," continues Madame Helvétius, "which reminds me, Franklin — when is your precious grandson Temple

going to do his duty, and give you a great-grandchild?"

Dr. Franklin's "precious grandson Temple" colours, as the attention of the group automatically swings to him.

"Temple is too young to think of such serious things, as yet," puts in Madame Brillon, kindly, and I smile weakly at her, as if in gratitude, although inwardly amused at the irony of the situation, since I hope so soon to ask her for her daughter.

"Nonsense!" says Madame Helvétius, eyeing me. "If what I hear about your adventures is true, young man — it's high time you settled down. Your grandfather and I shall have to find you a wife!"

"You are too good to me!" I murmur. Lafayette overhearing, laughs.

"Perhaps our friend Temple has fooled you all, and already has a wife," he remarks, with a friendly smile.

"It's more likely he's given Franklin the great-grandchild he wants, without bothering to wait for a wife!" returns Madame Helvétius rather coarsely, I think, and I suddenly colour warmly.

"If that's true, Temple is a real diplomat," says Turgot, "for he is already busy forging chains of friendship between his nation and ours!"

His sally brings another laugh, and I glance at Grandfather. For once he is not smiling, and as he glances at me, I cannot help but notice a momentary troubled look across his face. He fastens his gaze on me, and I give him back look for look, uncon-

sciously raising my chin a little, as I smile faintly in my turn. An imperceptible relief flashes across his countenance as he smiles, in his turn. He has asked a question, and answered it for himself. He is satisfied.

In the meantime, Madame Brillon, divining my embarrassment, summons me to her side. I go, gladly, kissing first her hand, then Blanchette's, bowing to each as I do so.

"You must not mind Madame Helvétius, Temple," whispers Madame Brillon, sweetly. "She's a tease, if rather a crude tease. But she is fond of you, and means well."

I murmur something indistinguishable in response, but my attention is rivetted to Blanchette, for there is an infinite amusement in her eyes, and I can guess why. Before I can say more, Madame Helvétius, leaving Grandfather's knee, leaves the room on some errand of hospitality, and Dr. Franklin, catching Madame Brillon's eye, evidently signals to her, for she suddenly rises, and goes to his side, perching on an arm of his chair. I seat myself beside Blanchette.

Blanchette smiles at me, with only the faintest trace of her habitual mockery in her eyes.

"*Comment-allez-vous,* Monsieur Temple?"

"*Très bien, Madame. Et vous-même?*" coolly.

"Very well, indeed, thank you. Is it to be war — or peace?"

"Shall we say — an armistice?"

"Then you haven't quite made up your mind,

Monsieur Lochinvar, whether you still dislike me or not?"

I look at her, soberly.

"I should like to like you very much. But you are a most disconcerting person."

"Because I told you that I did not approve of you?"

"No. because I can't quite make up my mind whether your eyes are blue or grey or green. Do you change their colour with each frock, Madame?"

She gives me a long look. By day, now, I see that her eyes are as much an emerald or a smoky grey, as azure. Only, perhaps, the blue seems to predominate. It is interesting.

"I had begun to change my mind about you, I confess. But now I see that I was wrong. You are an incorrigible flirt, Temple Franklin."

"Not at all," say I, humbly. "I am merely a pilgrim on the road of life, searching for the shrine of truth."

"Rather an elegant pilgrim, *n'est-ce-pas?*" she asks, swiftly taking me in from head to foot — my fine waistcoat, and brave coat, the meticulously arranged lace at my throat and wrists, my gold sword-knot, and vermilion heels. "And what is the essence of this truth which you seek?"

"The truth about women, of course," I return, gravely. "Our age, as all the world knows, is an age dominated by women. Like Grandfather, by temperament I prefer the gay and cheerful type — those who amuse, but do not discuss. But it interests

me to study women of every type, for to understand life, one must understand women."

"And how has your quest succeeded?" she asks me, between half-closed lashes.

"The more I learn about women, the less, I realize, I shall ever know," say I, frankly. "No mere man can ever hope to truly understand the mass of contradictions which constitute your charming sex."

She makes a little *moue*.

"Terrible man! You've found your grail of truth, already!" She eyes me, thoughtfully. "You know almost as much about us as does your Grandfather. And there is little that Dr. Franklin does not know!"

"You flatter me . . ." I deprecate.

"You're posing . . . !" says she, of a sudden. "Come — let's be ourselves, for a change — even if it isn't the fashion nowadays for men and women to tell each other the truth." She pauses. "What did you think of Madame Helvétius' suggestion?"

"Madame is clever in some respects," I say, impulsively, "but in others she's an old fool! Sometimes I wonder what Grandfather sees in her!"

She smiles faintly.

"She *is* a bit coarse, I'll admit — but she means well. And she's no fool — *jamais cela!* I'm afraid she shocked your sensibilities. . . ."

I flush.

"You don't understand . . . such conversation

— between men — is natural. But with women — before ladies — "

" — Is unnatural? " She laughs. " You Americans have such weird ideas of propriety! "

" If nothing else," rather sullenly, " we have a sense of the fitness of things! "

" *Seigneur!* How boring it must be, to be a lady, in America! "

" You don't understand," I protest. " You belong to a sophisticated, worldly society. Our ladies are, in the last analysis — still old-fashioned, still provincial. It is a broad age we live in — you have only to read Fielding or Smollett, or even your Rousseau, or the Italian Casanova — to realize that. What was vulgarity in our fathers' or grandfathers' day, is commonplace wit today. Yet there are still people whom such things offend."

" Including yourself? " archly.

" Not exactly," stiffly. " I am trying to explain to you the difference between your society and ours."

" I see . . . what a curious combination you are, Monsieur Temple Franklin! Such worldliness on the one hand — and such naïveté, on the other! *Ma foi!* — but you interest me more each time I see you! "

" Then I have not lived in vain! " I return, ironically.

" Nevertheless," says she, surprisingly, " I like you. We have a French saying, Monsieur Diplomat, which I think fits you charmingly."

" I am all ears! "

"You have the defects of your qualities, and the qualities of your defects . . . *charmant, n'est-ce-pas?*"

I say nothing, since there is no fitting retort I can think of making, at the moment, and she suddenly leans forward, putting her hand on my arm.

"You still think yourself in love with Cunégonde?"

"I *am* in love with Cunégonde!" I snap.

"And you still persist in refusing my aid?"

"Must we bring up that subject again, Madame?"

"Not unless you wish. But I would like to warn you of something, nevertheless. Whether you know it or not, Cunégonde has not the strongest character possible. She can be talked over — for or against anyone — very easily."

"Is this a threat?" I ask, rather childishly.

"Don't be absurd! It's just that I thought you should know that. And, that if you liked, I would undertake to speak to her now and then — reminding her of how nice it would be, marrying you.

"That is quite unnecessary, I hope. . . ."

"There is Monsieur Paris," says she.

A wave of jealousy floods my brain.

"That nincompoop! . . . Anyway, it's out of the question. She loves me."

"Perhaps she does," admits Blanchette. "But if Madame Brillon or her husband should take it into their heads to persuade the child to marry

Monsieur Paris — it is not impossible that she would obey them, loving you or not."

I am silent, suddenly realizing that there is much truth in what she says. Cunégonde, it is true, is very easy to talk over; I have found this out for myself many times, in little matters. And it is no secret that young Paris, whose people have both money and position, is a suitor for her hand.

Blanchette, watching me, gives me a curious look.

"You *are* in love with her, aren't you?"

"I'm afraid so," I admit, miserably, and look up into her face. "I've been in love with her as long as I can remember. If she should marry Paris — or anybody else — I should — should . . ." I flounder about, at a loss for words.

"Don't be so upset," says Blanchette, compassionately. "It'll come out all right, if you play your cards carefully. There's no reason why you two shouldn't marry, since you're in love with each other. The Brillons are very rich, true — but you're your grandfather's heir, I understand, and destined for a diplomatic career. With his influence behind you and your brains and personality, there is little doubt that you have a most brilliant career before you."

"You are very kind to say these things," I stammer.

"No," says she, quietly. "It is only the truth. I like you, and I am very fond of Cunégonde. In fact, I think you would be very good for Cunégonde. Not only could you satisfy her social ambitions, but, mov-

ing in your world, she would come to achieve a newer, a healthier outlook on life. Despite Madame Brillon's cleverness and intellectuality, Cunégonde has a great deal of her father in her. She has a strong acquisitive sense, and a rather distorted idea of the value of money — almost a *bourgeois* sense of money. She is the type of girl who thinks that her money can buy her anything or anybody; and in a way she is not wrong, for it's a long time since wealthy *bourgeoisie* began buying titled sons-in-law for their daughters."

"That is true," I admit. "I find that your French *nouveau riche,* while preserving his earlier character, adds to it a savage pride, which he gauges by the size of his wealth. Money means a great deal to you — almost as much as does birth."

"More so, in some circles, difficult as that is to believe," says Blanchette. "Money seems to be our god nowadays. Voltaire said: *'We are in the age of gold — up to our necks!'* He was right. And the Brillons, intelligent and hospitable and appreciative as they are of art and talent, birth and breeding, are most appreciative of money. It is in their blood."

"I am not worried about that," I tell her, seriously. "As you know, I am one of Grandfather's heirs, and he is by no means a poor man. But I am worried about Cunégonde, for it is true that she is very changeable. I am never sure of her."

"Luckily for you," says Blanchette, dimpling, "Cunégonde isn't sure of you, either. She knows that, moving in the brilliant — and less brilliant —

circles that you do, that you necessarily meet many charming women, and of course she knows that you are fickle — "

"Does she, indeed?" I query, with a grimace.

"She does," calmly. "All men are fickle, more or less. But some of them have the courage of their — conventions — shall we say? It doesn't matter . . . the fact remains that Cunégonde isn't sure of you, and as long as a woman isn't sure of a man, she's interested, and wants him. It's when she's sure of him — certain-sure — that there's danger of losing her."

"That rule works both ways, doesn't it?" I remark, idly.

The smile abruptly fades from her face, and I could kick myself for my indiscretion.

"*Vous avez raison,* Temple . . . yes, you are right. It works both ways."

There is an awkward silence, and I attempt to bridge it.

"I do hope you'll forgive me for being rude to you, the other day — Blanchette . . . may I call you Blanchette?"

"Of course, Temple; and there is nothing to forgive. It's the people we like best that we usually quarrel with most absurdly." The sad smile reappears. "I'm glad to have you for my friend."

"And I, you!" impulsively. "Real friendships are rare, Blanchette. And I haven't many."

"And I," says Blanchette, thoughtfully, "not any . . . it must be hard for you to imagine anyone with-

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out a real friend, Temple; you know so many people!"

"Not hard at all. I know so many people that I haven't any friends . . . odd, isn't it? Perhaps it's because I divide my energies in the society of so many that I haven't any left to cultivate a few." Somehow, in Blanchette's company, I seem to forget myself, and let my inner thoughts flow out. "As a matter of fact, Blanchette, I'm horribly lonely . . . and it's a peculiarly acute loneliness, because I'm lonely in a crowd. Sometimes I think that is why I want to marry and settle down — to have the companionship of someone who can keep my feet on earth when I'm in the clouds, and bring me nearer heaven when I'm in Hell!"

She looks at me, her eyes shining, lips slightly apart.

"So you know! To think that there's someone else who understands . . . !" She leans forward, earnestly. "Temple, do you know what it is to be unhappy?"

"I've been vaguely unhappy all my life," I tell her, soberly. "Sometimes less acutely so, when I've been in high spirits — drinking with men, making love to women; I suppose that's a form of happiness. Forgetfulness."

"What have you to be unhappy about?" she wants to know, intently. "I — well, a woman's happiness is generally bound up in her husband — if there's none in marriage there isn't any anywhere. The odd thing about it is," she continues, reflectively,

" that although my marriage, like Madam Brillon's and most French marriages, was a *marriage de convenance,* I once thought I loved my husband. Indeed, I'm sure I did. But it was the old story . . . he neglected me for other women. He thinks I do not know, but it is ridiculous, that. The wife always knows!"

I am silent, full of a warm sympathy for her, and as if sensing the communion between us, she goes on, the words rushing out as if she has kept them pent-up for so long it is impossible to dam them any longer.

" I have a little girl," says Blanchette, and the tenderness of her eyes and mouth is indescribable. " I have my little Sabine, and now she is all in the world that I love. But I am young — I am human. I am, after all, a woman. I want attention and affection — I'd be so *content* with just a few scraps of affection! But do you think I — or any other woman like myself — ever gets it? Our husbands barter for us, and marry us, and give us children. But do they give us love?" She laughs, an embittered, scornful little laugh which somehow sounds incongruous coming from her young lips. " To their wives they give their names — but their love — ah, that is for their mistresses!"

My heart is aching for her, but I sit there, still silent. What can I say, that would not be an impertinence — almost an impiety?

" Madame Brillon is lucky," Blanchette continues, a bit more calmly. " She has Dr. Franklin, and, besides, her youth is almost over. While I — I am

young, and lonely, and hungry for love — for companionship. And I have *nobody*. . . ."

There is such an exquisite sadness in her voice, such utter desolation of spirit, that I take her hand in mine, impulsively, touched to the core.

" If my poor friendship can mean anything to you, Blanchette — it is yours for the asking! " There are sudden tears in her eyes, like melted diamonds, and I squeeze her hand, gently. " Cunégonde and I will always be your friends, Blanchette! "

"*Je vous remercie* . . ." says Blanchette Caillot, softly, and then is silent for a long moment. " I ask pardon for my little outbreak, Temple — but somehow, you're the sort of person in whom one can't resist confiding. And I had a reason for telling you these things, *mon ami*. The reason is — Cunégonde. I am fond of her, and I should not like to see her go through what I have gone through. Don't marry her unless you love her, Temple . . . and if you marry her treat her as if she were your mistress as well as your wife. That is the secret of marriage, my friend — the real secret of happiness! "

4. Madame Brillon is returning, and I am standing, bowing over Blanchette's hand. She whispers a final word.

" I shall speak to Madame Helvétius, Temple — and suggest that *she* speak to your Grandfather, as if the idea of your marrying Cunégonde were her own. I know she will do it, particularly after I explain, discreetly."

"You are an angel!" I whisper, and aloud: "I have so enjoyed our chat, Madame Caillot!"

"*Et moi, aussi, monsieur!* You must come to visit us, sometime, with your grandfather." And, under her breath, "My garden tomorrow night at nine — by the sun-dial near the river!"

Madame Brillon approaches.

"With the greatest of pleasure, Madame."

Madame Brillon seats herself again, I kiss their hands, in turn, and bow myself politely away, just as the Marquis de Lafayette approaches. As I do so, I step on the tail of one of Madame Helvétius' cats quite by accident, and it naturally yowls. My hostess, who has returned to Grandfather's side in his great chair, is down on us in a trice, to soothe the feline and scold me. I cannot help grinning, amidst my apologies; I am sorry, of course, about the cat. The company is convulsed with laughter.

"*Mon pauvre Poupon!*" to the cat. And to me — "Conscienceless brute!" Then, as I stand there, like an abashed school-boy, the terrible old woman suddenly smiles despite herself, and regally extends to me her hand. "*Je vous pardonne — là — baisez ma main!*"

Mine not to disobey; I am forgiven.

I kiss her hand.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

Wherein Is Expounded Why, In The Spring, A Young Man's Fancy Turns To Thoughts Of An Amorous Nature

TODAY is a busy day for me, and there is little time I have for reflection, which, perhaps, is just as well. Sometimes it is not good to think too much, and this is one of those times.

The first thing in the morning, at Grandfather's suggestion, I begin one of my periodical inspections of the household, in company with Monsieur Finck, the Legation's *maître-d'hôtel.* The best way I can describe Finck, is to quote a remark Grandfather once made of him: "As to Finck, he was continually saying to himself '*Je suis honnête homme* — I am an honest man!' But I always suspected that he was mistaken, and so it proves." That is Finck. But he is no different from any other native major-domo employed by foreigners — particularly Americans — in France. It is understood from the beginning that they rob their masters.

Under Finck is Coinet, the cook, Arbelot the coachman, Champagne the butler, Joseph Rogey the kitchen boy, Brunal the footman, and the rest. We visit the kitchen and stables and butler's pantry, and I see Brunel the cabinet-maker, and Chocanne the woodman. The pantry is well stocked with tarts, hams, custards and meat pies, and the medicine chest with alkali, anise seed, gargles,

quinine, Peruvian bark, manna, and Spanish licorice.

From here we proceed to the cellars — upon which it is my particular province to keep a close watch, servants being what they are. Our cellar was stocked by the Chevalier O'Gorman, son of the Chevalier d'Eon, and includes 1040 bottles: 21 bottles of Champagne, 326 bottles of white Mousseux, 258 of red and white Bordeaux, 15 of old Bordeaux, 148 of Xeres — for Grandfather is very fond of Spanish wines — and 113 bottles of red Burgundy.

Although when Grandfather was a boy in London, his fellow-printer called him the "Water-American" because he substituted water for their daily mugs of beer, this was not for abstemious reasons, but for reasons of economy. He is very fond of Madeira, not to mention champagne, and although it is true that he drinks little at home, leaving that to his guests, abroad he can down his second bottle with the best of them. And I have heard Father say that he has held his own with a chief justice of England known to be a four-bottle man. Yet, all in all, Grandfather is fairly temperate, and, I believe, drinks less than General Washington, who regularly drinks from half a pint to a pint of Madeira, not to mention punch and beer.

I next look over the monthly accounts with Finck. As usual, this is around fifteen hundred francs a month; the only month in the year in which this varies is July, when expenses are higher because of

the Independence Day celebration on the Fourth of July. Last year the monthly total was 2346 francs.

My tour ended, I seek out Grandfather in the garden, to make my report.

2. Grandfather Franklin is sitting in his usual chair overlooking the river, talking animatedly to his friend the Abbé Morellêt, who lives at the house of Madame Helvétius. Although apparently in high good humour, he is, as always, in a reposeful, almost indolent attitude, which never reaches the point of excitability, even when he is irritated with someone. He never swears, declaring that no one with a sense of humour finds it necessary to swear, and often gently rebukes me when I happen to do so, which is not seldom. In this, he is altogether the opposite of Washington, who, it is said, has a fiery temper which he seldom finds it possible to control, and who, one of his officers once told me, can swear "like an angel of God!" Not that Grandfather is never angry; he is, and often. But his anger is deliberate, calculating, and therefore more to be feared. Although he never attacks or abuses anyone, only using subtle ridicule on his enemies, he is a loyal friend and an even more faithful enemy, as King George can well testify!

As I approach the two, they suddenly stop talking with suspicious promptness, and I wonder, dimly, why. But I have my own affairs to worry about, and little time for any one else's. Briefly, I make my household report, and Grandfather, his mind ever

on small economies, listens with close attention, particularly to the condition of the cellar. The Abbé seems rather amused at this.

"If you paid less attention to your cellar, *cher ami,* you'd get less attention from your gout."

At thought of his enemy, the gout, Grandfather smiles wryly.

"My fondness for eating is more to blame than my solicitude for my wine. There is nothing like a glass or two of champagne to put one in a good humour, Abbé!"

"Then you must have had a bottle of it, sir," say I, smiling," for, in faith, I've seldom seen you in such rare good humour as this."

Dr. Franklin and the Abbé exchange meaning glances, and again I am puzzled. I note that Grandfather is unusually gay. He suddenly quotes some doggerel of his own which I remember as being from his Almanack; beaming upon me as he does so:

"Boy, bring a bowl of china here,
Fill it with water cool and clear;
Decanter with Jamaica ripe,
And spoon of silver, clean and bright,
Sugar twice-fin'd in pieces cut,
Knife, sieve and glass in order put,
Bring forth the fragrant fruit, and then
We're happy till the clock strikes ten!"

"Temple, how is the Madeira? We must give the Abbé some Madeira!"

Still marvelling at his gayety, and at Morellêt's secret amusement, I refer to my list.

"We're out of Madeira, sir. I shall have to order some more."

"That is too bad!" says Grandfather, regretfully. "My apologies, Monsieur l'Abbé! . . . Temple, have Finck be careful to examine the next cask. The last bottle I opened had some flies in it." He turns to Morellêt. "Would you believe it — they came to life again, after months of imprisonment?"

"*Merveilleux!*" marvels the Abbé.

"I wish it were possible," muses Grandfather aloud, as is sometimes his habit when struck by a new idea or fantasy, "to invent a method of embalming drowned persons in such a manner that they may be recalled to life at any period, however distant." He smiles, mischievously. "For having an ardent desire to see and observe the state of America a hundred years hence, I should prefer to any ordinary death the being immersed in a cask of Madeira wine with a few friends till that time, to be then recalled to life by the solar warmth of my dear country!"

"To be pickled in wine!" chuckles Morellêt. "A most admirable conceit!" He makes a grimace. "But I hope that you will not spread these ideas abroad, *mon ami.* Coming from a man like yourself, they would be too eagerly accepted. And you know as well as I that indulgence in wine is not good for the Lord's flock."

Dr. Franklin leans back in his chair, eyeing his friend quizzically.

"My Christian brother, be kind and benevolent like God, and do not spoil his good work. He made wine to gladden the heart of men; do not, therefore, when at table you see your neighbour pour wine into his glass, be eager to mingle water with it. Why should you drown *truth?*"

"Do you call drunkenness truth?"

"It is when a man is drunken that he speaks the truth," I interpolate, chuckling. "Give him water alone, and you will only hear lies, for all men are natural born liars."

"Temple is right," says Grandfather, and drops momentarily into the slang of London and Philadelphia. "Addled, buzzey, crocus, dagg'd, cock'd, fettered, hammerish, momentous, valiant, juicy, or nimtopsical — it is all the same — one is drunk however you put it . . . have I left out any, Temple?" as the Abbé listens in amaze.

"Yes, sir," I return, searching my memory. "There's stew'd, and boozy, and cockeyed, and oil'd, and glaized, and —"

"That's enough, thank you," says Grandfather. "You see, Monsieur l'Abbé, our English language has a great many synonyms for that state you so deplore. Think how much poorer would be our vocabulary with water alone!"

"Water is good for one," argues the Abbé, "although I admit few of my countrymen drink it. . . ."

"Good to bathe in, yes!" retorts Grandfather. "I have always been an ardent disciple of bathing . . . but as for drinking — well, do not then, offer

water to any, except to children; 'tis a mistaken piece of politeness, and often very inconvenient. I give you this hint as a man of the world; and I will finish as I began, like a good Christian, in making a religious observation of high importance, taken from the Holy Scriptures. I mean that the apostle Paul counselled Timothy very seriously to put wine into his water for the sake of his health; but that not one of the apostles or holy fathers ever recommended putting *water* into *wine!*"

Morellêt laughs.

"I'm afraid you don't live up to your own maxims, *mon ami.* Do you remember —

'Be temperate in wine, in eating, girls, and sloth,
Or the gout will seize you and plague you both?'

You see, I know my *Bonhomme Richard!*"

Grandfather makes a little grimace.

"You are right about the gout. It has exacted a painful punishment from me, for my love of food and drink."

"'*And* girls — and sloth?'" queries the Abbé, slyly.

"We are discussing wine, not women," returns Grandfather, imperturbably. "Let us be consistent. But since you do me the honour to quote my *Poor Richard* — I'll give you another: 'There are more old drunkards, than old doctors!'"

"Where would your gout be, if it were not for the doctors?" demands Morellêt.

"Cured, most likely," retorts Dr. Franklin, who has small use for quacks. "He is the best physician who knows the worthlessness of the most medicines. . . . God heals and the doctor takes the fee!" He suddenly smiles. "Not that I disapprove of all doctors — some of them are my best friends." And I know he refers to Ingenhouz, and Sir John Pringle, John Fothergill, Barbeu, Dubourg, Guillotin, and Sir William Watson, to mention the most celebrated. "I have often disobeyed doctors' orders, and as often have suffered less because of that disobedience. Some few doctors know their business — but most are quacks, and I am enemy to all quacks!"

"God alone is the great Healer," says the Abbé, piously. "Of broken bodies and broken hearts." He suddenly smiles, glances at me, and winks at Grandfather. "Speaking of hearts . . ."

I look from one to the other of them, rather piqued at all this mystery. The Abbé, noting my obvious air of puzzlement, rises to his feet, as he exchanges another look of intelligence with Dr. Franklin.

"I have been selfish in imposing on your time, *mon cher ami*. You are, after all, a great public servant, and your time is valuable. My apologies."

"Not at all," protests Grandfather, but there is no conviction in his tone, and, somehow, I feel that there is meant to be none, and that the merry Abbé knows it, and secretly understands why. I am more puzzled than ever. Grandfather continues. "I am

sorry you must hurry away, Abbé — *mes meilleures amitiés* to Madame Helvétius, and many thanks indeed, for coming to see me."

They exchange further compliments, and the Abbé, refusing my escort to the gate, takes his leave. I am alone with Grandfather, at last.

3. "I have been thinking about you for a long time, Temple," says Grandfather.

"Indeed, Grandfather?" warily.

Grandfather looks at me quizzically.

"There is an old saw, Temple — to the effect that 'in the Spring, a young man's fancy — '"

"Yes, Grandfather?" blandly.

"'— turns to thoughts of love.'"

"Indeed, Grandfather?"

"As far as I am concerned," says his excellency, "it's Spring all year round. But then, I'm no longer young. And you are." He sits back, and regards me fixedly. "Tell me, Temple. Have you ever thought of marriage?"

My heart leaps . . . but I dissimulate.

"Have I ever thought of *what* — sir?"

"Marriage. To find a charming young girl — a lady — and settle down, and raise a family . . . what on earth are you grinning at, Temple?"

"Nothing, sir! Indeed, nothing!"

He looks at me suspiciously.

"You haven't been a young fool and gone off and married secretly, have you, sir?"

I shake my head in hasty negation.

"Are you involved — in any way?"

I hesitate a moment, and think fast. And am glad that I can answer as I do.

"Certainly not, sir."

"Good!" says Grandfather, with obvious relief. "To tell the truth, I was half afraid you were — youth being what it is, and Paris being what *it* is!"

I say nothing. . . .

"You know, Temple," says Grandfather, "I have great plans for you — high ambitions." He looks off dreamily toward the river. "God in His wisdom saw fit to take away my little Frankie —" (referring to Francis Folger Franklin, the little son he lost long before I was born, and for whom he still secretly mourns) "and there was only your father left. I had great hopes for William, but you know what happened . . ."

He pauses, and I think of William Franklin, my father, erstwhile royal governor of New Jersey, and most loyal subject of his majesty, the King. In an instant my mind flies back over the gap of the years, and I remember that fateful scene in my father's Jersey home. That day when Grandfather and I, just returned from London, to find the Colonies on the verge of revolt, visited Father. The day I heard Father upbraid Dr. Franklin for turning rebel to the Crown . . . *upbraid* him, when Grandfather himself had come to ask Father to stick by his country and join the cause of liberty. Never, to my dying day, shall I forget that scene between Father and son! Grandfather, angrier than I had ever seen him

before, in all my life — first pleading with Father to renounce his allegiance to King George, and next denouncing his flesh and blood as a traitor to his country!

To this day I remember how I stood there, listening, almost frightened by the stubborn passions of these, my two progenitors — while Elizabeth Franklin, Father's wife, stood weeping in the doorway . . . she is long in her grave, now, poor lady, having died of sorrow and humiliation while Father lay in a Patriot prison in Connecticut. My own breast filled with conflicting emotions, I stood there, torn between one and the other. I was a true Patriot, of course, but also Grandfather had brought me to New Jersey from Philadelphia to leave me with my Father, to live, permanently, and this plan seemed now about to dissolve in thin air.

Although I had spent most of my life with Grandfather, more in the light of his son, than as his grandson, I always entertained a peculiar curiosity and unusual affection for Father. I had been delighted at the prospect of coming to live with him, and it was for that purpose that Dr. Franklin had brought me there. Now it seemed to me that I might not be allowed to remain, nor was I mistaken. Declaring that, in the face of what he called Father's treason to his country, he would not permit me to stay with him, and grow up to be a Tory, Grandfather forthwith took me back to Philadelphia. To accurately describe my own feelings at that time is almost impossible. My heart wanted me to stay,

and my head told me not to do so. But it was not left to me to decide. Grandfather, as usual, decided for me, in the same patriarchal manner in which he directs the other affairs of the family. He took me back, and, perforce, I went, bowing to his dominating will.

From that day, however, began the tiny, almost invisible seed of antagonism which has existed, almost imperceptibly, in our relations, ever since. Somehow, illogical as it may seem, I feel as if Grandfather cheated me out of my Father — out of his love and companionship and possession — and somehow I have always resented that. It is a curious problem, which I shall go into at more length, later.

Father is now living in London. I have seen him a few times in these past seven or eight years. Grandfather has never seen him since their quarrel on the eve of the Revolution. Nor has he — although they now correspond — quite forgiven Father for choosing to join America's enemies in the day of her greatest need.

4. "Little Frankie is dead," says his excellency, heavily, "and your father, William, the same as dead. You and Benny are left to me, and Benny is a Bache. You, Temple, are the last Franklin, and it is through you that I hope to continue the family name. You must marry, and marry well — you must marry a gentlewoman."

"Yes, Grandfather," I assent with glowing eyes,

but he does not notice. He is wrapped up in his patriarchal dream of Family with a capital F. To Grandfather's mind, it is the duty of every man to marry and carry on the race. His creed, roughly, as I see it, is: Make money — be economical — and have children! Perhaps it is that creed of his which endears him so to the French. He — and it — is so like them.

Nor do I fail to catch the hint about the "gentlewoman." My unknown mother is not supposed to have been a gentlewoman; neither was the mother of my father, William Franklin. Grandfather's last remark brings a wry twist to my mouth.

"You have, perhaps, a candidate for my hand?" I ask, a bit ironically.

"I have," says Grandfather, placidly.

I stare at him, thunderstruck. That such a development as this should turn up just as I'm trying to muster up courage to speak to him about Cunégonde! Hurriedly I run over in my mind the various possibilities he may have in his. I am baffled.

"When in Rome —" I begin, and pause. "The same thing applies to France, I suppose. When in France, do as the Frenchmen do!" bitterly. "You apparently don't seem to care whether I love the young lady you have in mind, or not, do you?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" says Dr. Franklin, with his cryptic smile. "Of course I wouldn't expect you to marry anyone you didn't care for; although love, itself, my boy, is but a transitory thing. Sometimes I think the French are right, when, in considering

marriage, they consider practical matters first, and personal preference second. When the first flush of romance is gone, the business of living begins."

"Then you don't believe in love, Grandfather?" I ask, almost with a sneer.

"In youth's conception of love — perhaps not . . . I have seen too much of the realities of life not to recognize the illusions."

I think back to that period in Grandfather's history when, as a journeyman printer in London, he was courting the young relative of his tenant, Mrs. Godfrey. He told the parents that he expected with the girl as much money as would pay off his remaining debt for his printing house, then above a hundred pounds. Mrs. Godfrey, the go-between in this match, brought word that they had no such sum to spare. Grandfather retorted that they might mortgage their house in the loan-office.

The answer to this, after some days, was that they did not approve the match, in the hope, apparently, that the young people were too much in love with each other to let this stand in the way; indeed, it is likely that the parents hoped the two would elope, which would leave them at liberty to give what they wished, if they wished, at all. Grandfather, however, resented this, and withdrew his attentions. They made fresh overtures to him, later, but he would have nothing more to do with the family, nor with Mrs Godfrey.

Grandfather, having made up his mind to marry, then turned his attentions in other directions, but,

being a poor printer, without success. Eventually he returned to Philadelphia, where he married the former Miss Read. And in this affair, too, his caution mastered his sentiment, for he only took her to wife in a common-law marriage, for fear he might otherwise have to pay the debts left behind by the husband who had deserted her. They lived very happily together until Grandmother Franklin's death.

5. "And who might this lucky young lady be?" I ask, with intent for sarcasm.

"Who else but Cunégonde Brillon?" asks Grandfather, blandly, but with a twinkle in his eyes.

I stare at him, my mouth open, much like a goldfish out of water. I am too overcome to answer.

"You seem rather disappointed," says his excellency. "If you dislike her as much as that, my boy — say no more. We'll look further for a wife for you."

"'Disappointed?'" I echo, in a dazed voice. "Good Lord — Grandfather! How did you — who told you — what made you think — "

"One at a time!" and Dr. Franklin laughs one of his rare laughs. "I gave you a scare that time, you young rascal — didn't I?"

"But I don't understand!" I falter, but he pays me not the slightest attention.

"Going on under my nose all the time!" he chuckles, "and I not suspecting a thing. I daresay it's because you two practically grew up together, and I took you both for granted."

"What do you mean?" although I know very well what he means.

"You and Cunégonde, of course! So you love each other, do you?"

"Yes, sir," I admit, reddening a little. "How did you know that, sir?"

"By suddenly observing things I should have noticed long since!" says Grandfather, promptly.

"Does Madame Brillon know? Has she said anything —" eagerly.

"I don't imagine so, unless Cunégonde has spoken to her, or I think she would have told me. The truth of the matter is, I learned about it from Madame Helvétius."

"Madame Helvétius!"

"Indirectly. She sent the Abbé Morellêt here to see me this morning with a note. How she knows, is beyond me — but I suppose women see farther than mere men!" So Blanchette had not altogether betrayed me, after all! "She suggests that Cunégonde would make a good match for you, and intimates that she believes you love each other. That is true, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I congratulate you, my boy!" says Grandfather heartily. "There is no one on earth I'd rather see as my new grand-daughter than Madame Brillon's child! I have long wanted to have a real home — not a mere bachelor's hall, as we have had — and if you marry, I shall be happy at last! But why on earth didn't you come and tell me, long ago?"

" Chiefly, sir, because Cunégonde is not yet ready for me to do so. She wants to wait awhile."

" Nonsense, sir! A girl's whim, nothing more! You're not the man I was, Temple, or you'd never take a girl's ' no ' on such weak grounds! If you know what you want, go after it and get it." He smiles, benignantly. " I shall speak to Madame Brillon and her husband about it, as soon as possible."

" Thank you, Grandfather." I am in the seventh heaven of delight, but strive to hide my emotion. " You are very good to me, sir."

" Nonsense! Despite the fact that you irritate me beyond reason, at times, boy — I'm fond of you, and your happiness is mine."

I bow my head.

" I'm afraid I don't quite deserve your affection Grandfather," say I, with a lump in my throat. " I have given you cause for worry enough, God knows! "

" Don't talk such arrant bosh, Temple! You're a Franklin, and you're my son. . . ." I look up at him with wet eyes, but he is staring dreamily again at the river. " You and Benny are the hope and strength of my old age, Temple. In your hands lie the future of the Franklin name — the opportunities to serve your country and your fellow-men. To be a good patriot and a good citizen, you should be married and settled down. A man without a wife is half a man . . . single and separate, they are not the complete human being; they are like the odd halves of scissors: they cannot answer the end of their formation." He looks up at me, of a sudden. " You

have made me very happy, Temple. I am glad for both of us."

He extends his hand, and I grasp it, eagerly. In that moment we are closer together, perhaps, than we have ever been before. . . .

6. "And do you think they will consent?" I ask, anxiously. "What if they don't consent, Grandfather?"

"I see no reason why they should not," says he, judiciously. "In fact, I am inclined to believe that Madame Brillon, like myself, would welcome the union of our families." He nods his head, does Grandfather.

"*Ça ira* . . . it will go!"

As I leave him, treading on air, he is repeating his favourite phrase. "*Ça ira* . . . it will go!"

CHAPTER THE TENTH

A Chapter Of Kisses And Daydreams By Night

AS IS but natural, I cannot keep away from *Moulin Joli* and Cunégonde. I know her favourite spot in the lower gardens, near the Seine, and as I have guessed, she is there, with her needlework. Another basket — Aldegonde's — is there beside her own, but her sister, fortunately, is nowhere in sight.

I have come down the river from Passy in Le Ray de Chaumont's row-boat. I beach it on the more secluded end of the Brillon's island, and seek out Cunégonde's glade. To my delight, she is there, but she has not seen me.

Tiptoeing up behind her back, I warily approach, suddenly clamp my palms upon her eyes, and as, startled, she gives an exclamation, kiss her.

"Temple! What on earth are you doing here this time of the day?"

"What would I be doing here any time of the day? Come to see you, of course!"

"But I was not told. Does Mother know? — is Doctor Franklin with you?"

"No. I am alone. Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Of course . . . but surprised, just the same. I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow night. What brings you?"

"You."

I have squatted down on the grass at her feet, and hold her hands.

"Don't — Temple. Aldegonde will be back very shortly. What if she sees you?"

"Let her see. It soon won't make any difference, angel."

"Why won't it?" she inquires.

"Because Grandfather is going to visit your father and mother tonight, sweetheart — to ask that I be permitted to pay you court. To ask, in other words, for your hand."

"Temple!" She jerks away her hand. "You told him, after you promised to wait until I gave you leave!"

"No, I didn't. He raised the subject this morning himself. And when he asked me whether or not I was in love with you, of course I had to tell him the truth. Why not? I'm not ashamed of it."

She looks at me with a new-born excitement, half-thrill, half-fear, in her eyes.

"Temple — I'm afraid . . ."

"Afraid? Of what?"

"We're so young, you and I, Temple. Suppose what we believe to be love isn't really love at all? If we were married, it would be too late. That would be horrible!"

I sit up abruptly, clutching her hand.

"Cunégonde! Do you or don't you love me?"

"I — I think I do. No, I'm sure I do, *cher*. But sometimes — at night — when I lie awake and think — I wonder if we really are in love. You must for-

give me, Temple, for saying these things, but, you know, I can't help thinking them. I have seen so many other people's marriages so unhappy . . ." She hesitates, looking at me. "I *am* awfully fond of you, Temple, and I do want to marry you. I'm sure we could be so happy, together — you, with your career, and the money Father would give us. I often — "

"That's rot!" I exclaim, suddenly. "Either you love me for myself, Cunégonde — for my faults and virtues, not despite them — or you don't love me at all. Careers and money and the rest are nice things to have — but you can't be happy with those things alone!"

"Of course you can't!" agrees Cunégonde, and smiling, impulsively leans forward and kisses me on the top of the head. "You're such a silly, romantic boy!" I seize and kiss her hands and wrists, by way of reply. "Of course I love you, and will marry you, Temple, if my parents consent. But you see that they must, first, don't you?"

"Because of your dowry?" I ask, rather bitterly. "Can't you ever forget *dots* and careers, darling? Can't you think of just you and me — in a palace or in a hut — but the two of us together, at any rate?"

"Let's not quarrel," says Cunégonde. "You know I'll — " she cuts short, listening, then urges me to my feet. "Here comes Aldegonde! Hurry — get away before she sees you!"

"But why? Can't we trust Aldegonde?"

"*Seigneur!* How will it look? What would

Maman think?" She hurries me away from the glade, as we hear Aldegonde in the distance, gaily singing. "Things are different, now, Temple. Or will be, after tonight."

I agree. She accompanies me down to the beached boat, watches me get in, and holds out her hand to be kissed. Instead, I seize her in my arms, and kiss her in earnest. She does not resist much, only urges me to be off. I shove off into the river, and she throws me a kiss. Then, turning, disappears among the trees.

Whistling blithely, a delicious thrill of anticipation in my heart, I quietly row upstream.

2. At nine o'clock I am waiting beside the old sun-dial in the Caillot garden, so near our own. It is a very dark night, although the sky is powdered with stars, and there is no moon. It is a night for mystery, for adventure, for romance — but, as such, utterly wasted on me for my thoughts are two leagues down the Seine, on a little embowered island which guards an enchanted staircase and a girl with a melted moonbeam imprisoned in her hair.

Tense with excitement, I stride noiselessly up and down the river-bank. The Seine is a motionless stream of molten black velvet, gleaming here and there with star-dust. The night is rather warm, and fragrant with the perfume of unseen flowers. The very air seems to be heavy with anticipation, heavy-laden with my own anticipation.

It is very dark, and the air is fragrant; my breast is eaten with restlessness, and my head drunken with excitement. In my mind, I am seeing a thousand vignettes, of the interview that is even now taking place at *Moulin Joli*. What will the Brillons say? Is it conceivable that they will say "no"? I think back desperately, going over in my memory what Cunégonde once quoted her mother as saying, with reference to myself. Surely Madame Brillon cannot dislike me. She has let me flirt with the girls these past few years; she has even helped me pick out my hose, and tended me once when I was ill. She is Grandfather's dearest friend.

Surely the answer cannot be "no"!

3. Blanchette is come, and she is sitting on a stone bench under a great tree near the river, and I sit by her side, telling her what has happened. In the darkness it is hard to see the expression on her face, but I am conscious of that faint, sad-sweet perfume. Conscious, more acutely, of her sympathy. She is very *simpaticca,* is Blanchette.

She listens carefully to my tale, until I finish.

"So his excellency has gone to sup with the Brillons? *Bon!* And he will propose the match tonight? *Trés bon*. . . ! Are you very happy, Temple?"

I take her hands in mine, impulsively.

"Feel my hands? Are they trembling?"

She laughs, and of a sudden I am conscious of her own hands in mine. They are exquisitely soft and

warm, but not too small . . . they are the silky, yet firm hands I watched on the ivory-and-ebonies of the pianoforte the other night. But they are also friendly hands.

"You are a charming boy, Temple! Cunégonde is a lucky girl to have such a lover."

"Stop teasing, and tell me what you think about it. . . ."

"About what?"

"About — everything. Do you think they will consent? A thousand little devils! — but I know I shan't sleep a wink all night! . . . What in the world will I do if they should say 'no,' Blanchette?"

"Cross that bridge when you come to it, *mon ami*. But I see no reason why they should disdain your suit, *Monsieur d'Amérique!* Your greatest ally, of course, is your Grandfather, and his friendship with Madame. This marriage would be a most beautiful consummation of that friendship."

"Grandfather is a wonder!" I tell her, enthusiastically. "Do you know, Blanchette — I have never really appreciated Grandfather until this morning. It was then that I realized how much I owe him — how much he has done for me all my life." I look away, soberly. "But for Grandfather, I should still be regarded by the world, if at all, as William Temple — William Franklin's bastard!"

Blanchette squeezes my hand, sympathetically.

"If it were not for Grandfather," I continue, "I would have no right to the use of the name of Franklin. It was he who insisted that Father recognize me

as his son, and it was he who insisted that I use the name of Franklin, as if it were my own. Moreover, he took me into his own house, took me to London with him and had me well educated, and has since let me be his constant companion and confidential secretary. Grandfather has been far kinder to me than I have deserved!"

"Dr. Franklin is a great and good man — perhaps the noblest of our *siècle*," says Blanchette. "But it is only natural and just that he should have acted so to you. He loves you, Temple, and he is very proud of you. I have seen him watching you when you were not aware. . . ."

"Some day, perhaps, I shall be able to repay him for all his goodness to me," say I, huskily. "I confess I have not been everything that he could wish. There has been Father, for instance. He was a Tory and Grandfather a Patriot. I, too, was a Patriot. But nevertheless my heart was drawn to Father, who had done so little for me, and away from Grandfather, who had done so much. At the time of their terrible quarrel, when they stood at the parting of the ways, I felt that I had to choose one road or the other — and, Heaven help me, in my heart my Father's road was mine. Not politically, you must understand, but emotionally — spiritually. Somehow I felt that I belonged to him, and not to Grandfather."

"*C'est très intéressante*," says Blanchette simply. "*Continuez. . . .*"

And I continue:

"When the moment came for decision, I found

that there was no decision at all. . . . Grandfather had already decided for me; I was going back with him to Philadelphia. The Revolution broke out in earnest, then, and Father was arrested by the Patriots, and imprisoned in Connecticut. While he was there, his wife died of grief. At that time, I was already Grandfather's secretary, and there was plenty of work to do, for Grandfather, naturally, was in the forefront of affairs, since he was perhaps the most famous man in the Colonies. When Father was arrested, he did not lift a finger to help him; so severe was he in his indifference toward his son, indeed, that more than one man murmured that his attitude was unnatural — that he was a stern Roman underneath. In those days I was sorely tempted to rush to my father's side, but Grandfather forbade it. And I did not."

"Poor Dr. Franklin!" murmurs Blanchette.

"Yes, one must pity Grandfather, when one knows what he went through — and no one knows that better than myself! Why, when we sailed for France, to get assistance for our country, Grandfather had turned over his entire fortune to the Congress, in the cause of liberty; if we lost the struggle, he would be a poor man. And he was an old man, then, worn-out and ready to retire. Instead, he had to begin all over again, and I can tell you it was gall to his proud heart that his only son should desert his fellow-countrymen, and become an enemy of his flesh-and-blood. . . ."

"*Pauvre* Dr. Franklin!"

"Nevertheless," I go on, evenly, "my sympathies in secret were with my father, and I even felt resentful to Grandfather that he should not be able to forgive. It would have been so easy for him to have used his influence to have Father released from prison, and sent to England, which eventually did happen. Perhaps if he had done that, in the beginning, my stepmother would not have died of a broken heart. She never meant anything to me, one way or the other — but she was a good woman, and Father loved her. I held that, too, perhaps, against Grandfather."

"Poor old Roman!" says Blanchette, softly.

"Why do you pity *him?*" I demand, curiously.

"*N'importe!* . . . it doesn't matter, indeed, *mon ami.* Some day, when you are older, you will understand." She is silent, for a moment. "And so there was this antagonism between you and your grandfather. Of course, he knew it."

I sit silent momentarily, in my turn.

"It is something I have not been able to help, Blanchette. Something I am truly sorry for, but which is a thing beyond me — something born in me. Somehow, I have always felt that he should have left me with Father . . . somehow, my sympathy has ever been with Father, perhaps because he, too, was a — a —" I hesitate, hating to repeat the word I loathe. "If Father ever did not want me — was glad to get rid of me — I cannot blame him for it, somehow, for I know how he must have felt. I know," I tell her, very softly, "how *I* have felt!"

Blanchette suddenly takes my two hands in hers, and a hot drop suddenly stings my wrist.

"I am sorry for you, Temple."

"Why?"

"You are a sensitive boy, Temple. Life will be cruel to you, if you let it. You must fight back at life, and *not* let it. Otherwise, some day you will be mortally hurt. Some day," she goes on, softly, "your heart will break. And you will hear it crack. . . ."

"You think it, then, so brittle?"

"It is a most peculiar organ, the heart," responds Blanchette, thoughtfully. "Hard and soft, all at once . . . elastic, so that it may be wrung with pain and grief, and wrung again. And hard and proud, like a citadel, within whose walls throb the drums of joy, when one is happy. And there comes a day when the softness congeals from shock, and the hardness cracks under the sudden strain. And then it is that one's heart is broken . . . and the fire of youth — the essence of happiness — drains out through the jagged crack, and is gone forever."

"And then — ?" I ask, intrigued.

"There is no 'and then.' *C'est fini.* Life goes on, as it shall go on long after we are dead and born again, and once more in the dust. But the joy of living is lost forever."

"You are an odd sort of woman," I admit, frankly, there in the warm night. "You are young and beautiful — too young and beautiful to think such gloomy thoughts as these. I cannot quite understand you, Blanchette."

"You do understand me," says Blanchette. "Otherwise, I would not be telling you these thoughts which I have never spoken of to anyone else. You have something of your grandfather in you, Temple. Dr. Franklin's eyes, somehow, strike me as being the eyes of a man who has sat on a mountain-top, and looked down upon the sea . . . and your eyes are like his. You have very old and understanding eyes for one so young."

I think of a windy day I sat upon a boulder on the mountain dominating Toulon; sat upon the mountain looking down upon the blue harbour and the blue, blue sea. With the Mistral blowing out of the north, blowing through my hair, and the long, thick hair of the girl with me. She, too, liked to sit on mountain-tops looking at the sea, did this girl with the long, thick nut-brown hair and the laughing eyes of the *Midi,* and she told me that when the Mistral came out of the north, it blew for three days, or for six days or for nine. And for three and six and nine days, in summer, came the hot blast of the Sirocco, out of Africa, and across the Mediterranean to the mountain-top upon which we now sat, Olympians disdaining the earth.

I think of that windy day at Toulon, and of the girl with the laughing eyes, and I suddenly visualize Blanchette beside me in her place — Blanchette, beside me, exulting in the insolence of the Mistral, with all the mystery and mockery of the ages in her eyes which are stolen from the azure and emerald of the blue-green sea.

But, try as I may, however, I cannot imagine Cunégonde as sitting with me upon a mountain watching the sea. Cunégonde is a moon-lady, I tell myself, with the badge of her lunar heritage gleaming in her hair . . . she is for moonlit gardens, for moonlit staircases and balustraded terraces. But she is not for the day. No, Blanchette is for the day — for the warmth of the sun and the kiss of the wind, for the touch of the cool, green earth. She is reality, is Blanchette, while Cunégonde is illusion.

The fantasy tickles my fancy.

"I am in love with an illusion!" I murmur, unwittingly, aloud.

Blanchette, who has been lost in her own thoughts, as I have been in mine, stiffens with a start.

"I wondered if you'd ever realize that," says she. "You're older than I thought."

"Why do you say that?" I want to know.

"Because everyone who is in love is in love with an illusion. No man or woman is just as his or her lover pictures him or her to be . . . you have naturally placed Cunégonde on a pedestal, as perhaps she has placed you. But you must not forget that she is human, that she has the same faults and weaknesses that all other women have. Marriage, Temple, demands a certain amount of tolerance, of giving and taking." A bitter note creeps into her voice. "Particularly of giving!"

"You are not happy, with your husband, are you, Blanchette?" I ask, impulsively, placing a hand over hers.

She shrugs, then of a sudden lays her head down against my coat, and I know that she is weeping. I say nothing, but put an arm around her shoulder in a brotherly way, and gently pat her. Necessarily, her hair is very near to my face, and the faint bitter-sweet perfume that shall ever be mingled in my memory with the smell of rain and the interior of a dainty sedan chair, comes to me, bringing ghostly memories from the past.

She has exquisitely slim shoulders, that seem, somehow, to just fit into the the curve of my arm. Unconsciously, almost, I compare them to those of Cunégonde; she has beautiful shoulders, too, but they are broader, more stately. It is almost with a shock that I realize that I prefer those of Blanchette — I, who love Cunégonde.

"You and Cunégonde will be very happy," says she, very low. "You will be good to her. Promise me that, Temple."

"Of course we shall be very happy," I tell her. "And so will you."

"It doesn't matter about me," says she, in a muffled voice. "But you two are starting life from the beginning, and you should start it right. Love is a precious thing, once you have it, Temple. If ever you have it — and you have it now — hold on to it!"

"Blanchette . . ." I sense the misery she is in, and I grow correspondingly depressed. Instead of thinking of Cunégonde, I am filled with pity for Blanchette; there is an invisible bond between us —

a bond which began from the very moment I held her in my arms in the sedan chair. I sense this dimly, as I sense the curious realization that when she is happy, I can be happy, and when she is unhappy, so am I. This sympathetic communion of souls, then, is the ultimate in friendship . . . the understanding friendship I have been groping for all my life.

" Blanchette — look at me. . . ." I must soothe her, must drive out of her soul those demons of depression. My arm tightens almost unconsciously around her warm, soft shoulders. With my free hand I tilt up her chin. " Blanchette . . ."

She looks up, obediently, and despite the gloom I can sense the melting crystals in her eyes, the sweet quiver of her lips. Of a sudden my heart begins pounding violently. Our faces are very close, of necessity, and I can smell the indefinably sweet scent of her skin, and tears — the faint perfume of my memory of her. I tremble, and it seems that all my world is suddenly crystallized into her face, into her quivering lips.

The same magic is working on both of us, for she suddenly sways as her eyes close, too late to hold in a pair of tear-drops; perhaps it is the moonless gloom, or perhaps it is the star-dust, or perhaps even the invisible odours of the night. In any case, suddenly, irrevocably, we kiss.

It lasts but a moment, that kiss, and yet it lasts an eternity. Just long enough for me to gauge the sweetness of her yielding lips, to bite the fire of madness into my brain; just short enough for me to taste of

what she has to give, without drinking deep enough to satisfy my new-born thirst. For she suddenly pushes at my breast with all her strength, and drags her mouth from mine by sheer force.

I release her, dazedly; unsatisfied. I am horror-struck.

4. "*Mon Dieu!* — why *did* you?" She moans, like a little child in pain. "Oh, I am vile — vile!"

"It was all my fault," I mumble, between stiff lips. "I am sorry, Blanchette. Sorrier than I can say."

"Cunégonde . . . and I her friend," says Blanchette. "That I should stoop to — "

"It was the fault of the night — the fault of anything you wish to blame it upon, except yourself!" I tell her, tensely. "Of course you are Cunégonde's friend, Blanchette. And I am a cad. I, who love Cunégonde . . . who don't deserve Cunégonde!" I slide down to a knee on the grass at her feet. "Forgive me, Blanchette. Please say that you forgive me, or I can never face Cunégonde again!"

She rises abruptly to her feet, and I perforce follow suit. She essays the wraith of a laugh. Being a woman, she has regained her self-possession first.

"We are both being very silly, Temple. Of course you love Cunégonde, and there is nothing to forgive. As if a kiss between — friends — were such a horrid crime!" gallantly, and the ghost of her sad smile touches her lips. "I shall tell Cunégonde of it myself."

"And so shall I," I aver, but without enthusiasm.

Somehow, despite Blanchette's new air of casualness, assumed or not, that kiss — so tantalizingly unfinished — shall never leave my memory; it is one of those rare kisses that one never forgets. And of a sudden I find myself feeling that it would be a desecration to share the secret of its existence, with anyone, Cunégonde least of all.

" On second thought," says Blanchette, still gaily, but rather too quickly, " I shall say nothing at all. Girls in love are curious creatures, and she might take it amiss. We'll just pretend it never happened . . . shall we? " appealingly.

" I don't know what you're talking about," I tell her steadily. " Did someone kiss someone? "

" Perhaps I dreamed a dream," says my lady, very gaily indeed, now. " It is a little habit I have, let us say — of day-dreaming. Day-dreaming by night."

She is like a wood-nymph, there in the star-light — a wistful, wilful wood-nymph, englamoured in mockery and sadness.

" *Y suenos suenos son . . .*" I murmur, and bow most politely as she extends her hand in farewell. " Dreams," as the Castilian has it, " are only dreams " . . . and I am going to marry Cunégonde. I love Cunégonde Brillon.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

In Which Is Witnessed An Ascension At Versailles And A Decision At Passy

GRANDFATHER breakfasts with me, and tells me that he has asked Monsieur and Madame Brillon, on my behalf, for Cunégonde's hand.

They were unaffectedly surprised, says his excellency, over a giant omelette. Madame Brillon had said that they had become so accustomed to regarding me as almost one of the family — in the light of a foster-brother to Aldegonde and Cunégonde — that such an idea had never entered their heads. Whereupon Grandfather had put the said idea into their heads, again, in no uncertain terms. He was very fond of Cunégonde, and would be glad to have her for a grand-daughter-in-law; he would be honoured with an alliance with the Brillons, of whom he was so fond.

Brillon was surprised, and jovially told his excellency that he thought it high time to acquire a son-in-law or two, to succeed him in his business. Madame Brillon was overwhelmed, says Grandfather, and evidently touched by her dear "*papa's*" desire to unite their two families. However, she was more cautious than her husband, and declared that it was too serious a matter to be decided off-hand. They must be given a few days to think it over. She would speak to Cunégonde, discuss the affair with her husband at length. Marriage was a serious business, and her

daughter's happiness was paramount in *Madame's* mind.

Grandfather is very benignant as he tells me all this, beaming on me in a manner which shows that he is very pleased with me, indeed — as he is, in fact, with life in general. I have not seen him looking so fit, or in such high spirits for many months.

I must wait three days for my answer. Grandfather rallies me on my glumness.

"Why such impatience?" he wants to know. "You're going to be married for a long, long time!"

"But three days . . . suppose they should say no? Why do they have to think matters over?"

"Because they are gentlefolk," says his excellency. "You should feel complimented by their deliberation, sir."

I make a wry grimace.

"I could spare the compliment, Grandfather."

He chuckles, and drains his cup of chocolate.

"Are you sure you are quite certain of your own feelings, Temple? Are you going into the blessed state with your eyes open?"

"Quite, sir," say I, shortly.

Dr. Franklin smiles his sly smile.

"Keep your eyes open before marriage," his excellency quotes from *Poor Richard* — "and half shut afterwards."

2. Three days . . . !

I am not permitted to see Cunégonde again, according to a discreet hint from Dr. Franklin, and

I put in the time as best I can, to keep from thinking. That, however, is well-nigh impossible. I think of her, and of the prospective decision of the Brillons, night and day.

In the interval, although life seems to have stopped still for me, its routine continues. With Grandfather I visit the Mazarine Library, the Library of Ste. Genevieve and the Library of the King. We receive dozens of guests at the Legation, including the Duc de Croy and the Duc de Chaulnes — (he who was once exiled because of his dual with Beaumarchais) — and Prince Gallitzin, Russian Minister to the Hague, and Monsieur d'Eyck, Minister of Bavaria. And there are visits, in turn, we must make in the town.

The Rochefoucaulds — one of the most ancient and richest families in the kingdom — give a dinner for us at their hotel at 14 Rue Visconti, as does the head of the equally important Noailles family (of which the young Marquis de Lafayette, son-in-law to the Duc d'Ayen, is a member). And everywhere, at dinner-tables or in salons, Grandfather is received with the most extravagant veneration and affection. Somehow, his personality seems to fit in with all groups.

The Rousseauists and the Voltairians, ever deadly enemies, have both taken him to their hearts; the lyrical Rousseauists having taken the sayings of *Poor Richard* bodily into their creed of moral good-fellowship — and the Voltairians because they believe Grandfather is more deistical than Christian. He is

believed to be the most important man in America, and there are some whom you cannot convince yet that he is not the author of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the Constitution of Pennsylvania, *Common Sense,* and every other American document of importance. The high French nobility, pervaded with Rousseauism, have been looking for an idol, and Dr. Franklin, with his white locks, large spectacles, and Quakerish air has been enshrined as the deity of fashion.

3. We go to Versailles, and there is the never-old thrill when as we wait in the Oeil-de-Boeuf chamber, the Major of the Swiss Guards announces, as the great doors to the royal reception hall are thrown open: *"Monsieur l'Ambassadeur des États Unis d'Amérique!"* The son of a tallow-chandler — (Grandfather was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations) — is calling upon the grandson of Louis the Sun-King.

It is, as ever, a brilliant scene. Grandfather is the only man present who dares to appear without a wig, and many of the ladies present dress their hair in a high curly mass which imitates his much-talked-about beaver-cap; this fad is called the *"Coiffure à la Franklin."* The men are even more resplendent in their attire than the women. The great nobles wear cloth-of-gold and -silver adorned with lace and forget-me-nots, and those of lower rank velvet trimmed with gold and silver lace, which, to my mind, is even more effective. Like the others, I wear my court

sword, and my bravest costume. Grandfather wears his suit of dark brown velvet, grey hose, and silver-buckled shoes; he carries his hat under his arm, and wears no sword.

An immense throng is at Versailles today, for Montgolfier's balloon, which usually entertains the crowds in the gardens of the Tuileries, is to make an ascension for the entertainment of the Queen. The vast statue-ringed courtyard, the enormous grounds, the great staircases and innumerable antechambers of Versailles present an animated appearance.

Gilded boats float on ornamental lakes and canals, beautiful statues gleam in grottoes where courtiers are flirting with their friends' wives, and fair marquises dance with their gallants on velvet lawns, to the music of violins and the plash of waterfalls. The Palace itself — an endless succession of bronze- and marble-filled galleries, salons hung with priceless tapestries and canvases of the Masters, and stately halls glittering with gilded furniture and sculptured friezes — is breath-taking. Everywhere pictures depict the exploits and victories of the royal megalomaniac who was the Sun-King, and he is even represented on the ceilings as an Olympian deity.

It impresses me, does all this grandeur, for I admit that I love luxury and pomp, albeit I do come from the cradle of democracy, yet at the same time I cannot but remember that this magnificent tribute to one man's vanity cost not only a hundred million livres — which might have relieved the poverty of multitudes — but cost almost as much in human life,

owing to frequent epidemics during its construction. Candidly, despite my admiration for this noble pile, often-times it seems to me that Versailles is built upon a foundation of dead men's bones — and that the water jetting up from its magnificent fountains is really dead men's sweat and tears!

4. His Majesty, as always, is cordial to Grandfather, and Marie-Antoinette, her recent pique toward his excellency apparently burned out, invites him to join her group in the gardens, to watch the balloon ascension. The Queen, who seems to have the somewhat unfortunate propensity of invariably taking the wrong side in any argument, indorsed the Italian, Piccini, in the Piccini-Gluck controversy which has been agitating musical Paris. Her Majesty urged the directors of the Opera to employ Piccini, but instead they are inclined toward the German, Gluck, who is much the better composer of the two, I think. So does Grandfather, and he has expressed himself publicly on that point. In any event, Her Majesty recently came to hear of it, and asked Merci, disdainfully: "What can a man whose *métier* is to place rods on buildings know about music?"

She has apparently forgiven his excellency, however, for he, as well as myself, is near Her Majesty on the grounds when Grandfather's friend, Montgolfier, superintends the launching of his balloon. It is elegant and very strange, this great bag of air, its basket decorated with flowers and the royal arms, and its nacelles wound with gold and silver. Grand-

father is always an interested witness at a balloon ascension, and predicts great things for this new invention; he has done much to interest England in it.

I am in a little group near him and the Queen, including Madame Campan, Marie-Antoinette's favourite, the brilliant Austrian Countess von Ladenburg — a noted beauty in her Viennese youth, and now one of the greatest ladies of Paris — and my friend Johann Quistgaard, the Danish artist, who has been brought to Court by Greuze, painter to the King.

A trio near Dr. Franklin and the Queen are discussing the balloon.

"But of what use is it?" a supercilious courtier wants to know, as he languidly takes snuff.

Grandfather turns on him his quizzical smile.

"Of what use, monsieur, is a new-born babe?" And as a general laugh arises, he addresses the Duc de Croÿ: "It is a child; perhaps it won't amount to much, perhaps it will be very brilliant."

A little later, Mesdames De Campan and Ladenburg join Her Majesty, and I am left alone with Quistgaard, to my satisfaction. I first met him at the salon of Madame de Brabant, one of the dearest women in the town, and a generous patroness of the arts, particularly music. He is a great favourite with the men, as well as the ladies, is Quistgaard, and at home in every Court in Europe. He has just come from Vienna, and retails for my delectation the latest titbits of gossip from the Hapsburg capital.

Emperor Joseph of Austria has recently visited

his sister Marie-Antoinette, incognito, as he frequently does, and this leads to a discussion between Quistgaard and myself, of the King and Queen and their imperial brother of Hapsburg.

Quistgaard is very much interested in Marie-Antoinette. She was born, says he, on the night Lisbon was destroyed by earthquake, and the superstitious predict that she will some day meet with great misfortune. When her brother the Emperor visited Versailles in the first years of her marriage, he is said to have rebuked her because she gave Louis no heir. The story goes that she retorted that it was no fault of her own, and he went to question his brother-in-law. The King rather shamedly admitted that on account of a physical impediment, his marriage, contracted when both he and Marie-Antoinette were children, had never been consummated. He had been continent for seven years, confessed the King. Joseph of Austria advised medical aid, and the famous Jewish physician to the Queen, Dr. Lassone, was called in. He performed a simple circumcision, such as is obligatory upon every male infant of his ancient race, and a year later the first royal child — a daughter — was born.

5. It is a most interesting day, this, for everyone I know seems to be at Court, and it secretly amazes me that I should know, more or less intimately, so many people. I dance on a velvet lawn with the beautiful young Marquise de Veyrac-Paulhan, flirt extravagantly with the vivacious Comtesse de Vaulti-

bault, and win ten golden *louis* from young Lafayette, at *lansquenet,* and six pounds from Sir Frederick Ponsonby, the English author and diplomat. Only Prince Droutzkoy does not lose.

Paul Jones, who witnesses my run of luck, remarks that when one is lucky at cards, it means one is unlucky in love. I laugh, thinking of my Cunégonde, and how soon it will be that I shall be the happiest man on earth, but, being on the safe side, when I play *piquet* with the ravishing Countess de San Martino and Princess San Faustino, from the Italian Embassy, I am careful to lose a number of golden livres, which is always a diplomatic thing to do, when playing at cards with the fair sex. The popular man with the ladies is the one who, at the card-table, listens to everything, sees nothing, and loses stoically.

I am in high fettle, and laugh much, and talk much, and flirt promiscuously; and all the time my thoughts are on my Cunégonde, as I picture her in this environment. Cunégonde Brillon . . . Cunégonde Franklin . . . her excellency, Mrs. Temple Franklin, wife of the American Minister! In my mind's eye I see her beside me — my tall, proud Cunégonde — a woman to love, and a wife to be proud of . . . it is a picture that sets my pulse to leaping and my brain to burning, and it is with me all of that long, colourful day and evening that follows.

Twice, most unexpectedly, I think of a kiss on a moonless night — an unfinished kiss whose ghost lurks in some far corner of my heart. And twice, shaking my head almost imperceptibly, as if at the

memory of a bad dream, I deliberately break my train of thought, and force myself to think of another kiss on an enchanted staircase in a garden drenched with moonlight. A kiss that *was* finished, if less blood-stirring; a kiss that was but a promise of a life-time's caresses that lay ahead. Resolutely I think of that kiss, and that alone, and resolutely I keep my spirits high. For I am very happy, and I am going to marry Cunégonde Brillon. I love Cunégonde Brillon.

6. On the morning of the third day I awake in a curious state of excitement — in a mood of happy anticipation. It is a bright, sunlit morning, with a sky of cloudless blue, and an invisible bird is doing its best to sing its head off in the garden of the Hôtel de Valentinois, just outside my window. I am in sympathy with that bird, and grateful to that bird, just as one is remotely grateful to the author of a particularly satisfying poem which expresses most tellingly just the sentiments one would express, if one could.

I am idiotically happy, this morning, grinning continuously and fatuously as I dress, and as I do so, I whistle blithely, for once forgetful of the fact that I seldom whistle, since I whistle badly. Despite my blissful state, it is a sad, hauntingly familiar melody that I whistle, and unintentionally, almost, I try to remember its origin. Of a sudden, I do so, with a start, and cease whistling, inexplicably. . . . I am back in a candle-lit music room, watching a pair of magic hands on the keys of a pianoforte — listening

to the huskily musical strains of '*J'ai soif d'Amour.*' "Hungry for love." Why should anyone be hungry for love in such a well-ordered, such an altogether *right* sort of world, as this? I am all at once passionately sorry for Blanchette Caillot, and a little ashamed of my own happiness.

That mood, however, passes, when I leave my room. One of the longest days of my life is ahead, and I have time and inclination to think of no one, but myself and Cunégonde. Of Cunégonde and myself. The whole cosmos seems to centre about us two this morning. Such is the selfishness of love.

It is a long day, indeed, but not an uneventful one. Grandfather declares today a holiday, and we drive to town, and then go for a long walk. We stroll along the ramparts of the *Quartier Bonne Nouvelle,* where on one side are fields, and on the other are cabarets and dance halls, but more innocent in their gaiety than those of the Palais Royal. We watch the rope-walkers, jugglers and mountebanks, who seem to attract a lighter-hearted crowd than the *quinguettes.* And end up for midday dinner in the Rue Montorgueil, in the *quartier* near the *Halles,* where we feast on oysters, for which delicacy his excellency has a positive passion.

After dinner, Grandfather takes to his carriage again, and is off to pay a number of calls, including visits to his friends Dupont de Nemours, Dr. Quesnay, of the School of Economists, and Turgot, who is down with the gout. After these duties, he is to

go to *Moulin Joli,* to sup, and to receive the Brillon's decision to his proposal of marriage on my behalf.

Grandfather leaves me in high good humour, with much chaffing, and I am off, in my turn, to meet Le Ray de Chaumont and young Benjamin Constant de Rebecque and we attend a meeting of the former Appollonian Society, at the now Musée de Paris. This Masonic group held a great celebration in Dr. Franklin's honour in March last, and his bust was solemnly crowned with laurel and myrtle, and his name honoured by songs and speeches. Today La Harpe is giving one of his lectures in his famous course in literature. It is unusually interesting, but my thoughts, for once, are elsewhere.

Following this session, my friends propose that we three sup together, and go in search of adventure at the music hall known as *Les Grands Danseurs de Roi.* For once, however, I am not interested; indeed, in my new mood, I am inclined to look down on such diversion as positively youthful and callow. Besides, I am anxious to get home, and hear what Grandfather has to say. When he is to take me on an official call upon the Brillons. When, above all, I am to see Cunégonde again, alone.

Tense with excitement and anticipation, I bid Le Ray and Benjamin Constant both a cheery "good-evening" and a patronizing "good hunting," and return to Passy.

7. By the time I reach home, the weather has taken a turn. It has become insufferably hot during

the afternoon, and sultry. With the coming of sundown, the heat seems to grow more intense, oddly enough, and it would be unbearable, if my thoughts were not so fixed on other matters. Nevertheless, there are no stars in the sky, but clouds, instead, suddenly conjured up from nowhere. And there is the feel of rain in the still air. A shower, perhaps; no more. But rain, nevertheless, and I am casually glad.

I sup lightly, and alone, then, unable to sit quiescent any longer, go out into the garden, and begin to pace up and down. It is still very warm, but an unexpected breeze has materialized from limbo, blowing the sluggish heat before it, in hot short blasts. It has gotten very dark. Surely it will rain.

Just as I complete perhaps the hundredth restless circuit of the garden, I feel a large drop on my face, and simultaneously hear the roll of the American Minister's carriage wheels, entering the drive. The Hôtel de Valentinois is large, with two projecting wings, each of which ends in a belvedere, or a raised turret, supported by Tuscan columns. The De Chaumonts occupy the main and right wing, while we have the left wing, or *Basse Cour,* and use a suite on the ground floor for the chancelry of our Legation. I hurry around the right wing, in my haste, disdaining to pass through the house, and arrive in the great courtyard just as Grandfather is being helped out of his coach.

My heart is pumping with excitement, but I forbear to question him there before the servants, much as I should like to, and, instead, offering him my arm,

assist him into the house; almost simultaneously, there is the low rumble of distant thunder, and a flash of lightning fissures the sky.

It seems to me that Dr. Franklin leans heavily on my arm, and is not as sprightly as he had been in the morning. After all, I reflect, he is an old man, and it has been a trying day. It is little wonder that he is fatigued.

"You got home just in time, Grandfather," I remark, as Champagne, the butler, helps him off with his cloak, and Arbelot drives out of the courtyard, heading for the stables. "It looks like a rainstorm."

"We need rain," says Grandfather, and seems to hesitate a moment, looking at me out of the corner of his eye. He seems very subdued. "Come into my study with me."

I follow him to his study, and as I do so, a faint premonition that all is not well comes over me. My hands dampen, and a horrible chill seems to cast its cold breath on my heart, but I resolutely fight it back.

In the study, Grandfather seats himself in his favourite chair, and is silent for a space, while a servant removes his shoes and substitutes house slippers, and another lights the candles. As the room takes on life from the candelabra, I look at him closely, and am startled at the change that has come over him. No trace of his high spirits of earlier in the day remains with him; although he tries to pretend to be his usual self, I can see that his mobile lips are grim and his eyes thoughtful. He has perceptibly aged.

Hardly have the two servants left the room, closing the double doors behind them as they go, when I speak. And there is a tremor in my voice — a dread in my eyes — that I cannot deny.

"Well — Grandfather. . . ?"

He looks me in the eyes, and his face softens . . . with pity?

"I'm afraid I have bad news, Temple?"

"Bad news?" Can this be my voice? — this stiff automaton be myself?

He nods. And is obviously at a loss how to begin. A strange cold clarity settles upon my mind.

"Madame Brillon — they have . . . refused?"

He nods affirmation.

"'Tis best over quickly, my boy — as one plucks out a bad tooth. Yes, they have refused."

I stare at him incredulously. My mind is numb under this unexpected attack. I cannot yet realize the truth.

"But why, Grandfather? In God's name, *why?*"

"There are — reasons . . ."

"'Reasons!'" I laugh, scornfully. "What reasons could there possibly be when Cunégonde and I love each other? When it is no question of family or money?"

"I shall be as brief as possible, Temple. We discussed the matter at great length, but it all came down to this: they could not give you Cunégonde because of several reasons. One, of course, was the possibility of your returning to America to live. I admitted this was possible, but by no means important

enough to consider, in relation to Cunégonde's and your own happiness. Then they brought up the question of religion. This was their chief reason against the match, of course, although they hinted there were a few others.

I sink weakly into a chair near him, stunned.

" Monsieur Brillon also mentioned," says Grandfather, as if giving me time to recover, " that one objection was based on the fact that he would be forced some day to give up his business to his son-in-law, and that you, evidently, were not cut out for business, but for a profession like diplomacy, or public affairs. Their chief objection, however, was based on the difference between your respective religions. I tried to reason them out of this, naturally, but Madame Brillon insists that formalities are important in a young household."

" But what of us — of our loving each other? " I cry out, in anguish. " What of Madame Brillon's own unhappy married life? Hasn't she herself told you that in France marriages are a question of so much gold, not love or inclination? " I have forgotten that I overheard these sentiments while unintentially eavesdropping, with Cunégonde; nor does Grandfather seem to remember. " Hasn't Madame Brillon declared to you that she would see that *her* daughters were married for love, not convenience? "

Grandfather nods, somberly.

" She did. Nor has she changed her mind, she told me tonight. But she insists that the fundamentals are important. That romance is fleeting, and the little

things of life, real and lasting. She says that no doubt both you and Cunégonde will suffer, now, but both of you will recover, eventually. And both of you will marry someone, with whom conditions will be more nearly ideal. She is fond of you, Temple, and told me to tell you so. But the Brillons are Catholic, and she says that the barrier of religion, not to mention other things, makes this match impossible."

"Religion!" bitterly. "What has religion to do with love? What has *anything* to do with love?"

"Religion, unfortunately, my boy, has a lot more to do with most things than we like to think about. Some of the greatest achievements on earth have been accomplished by religion, but, too, some of the greatest wars — the most horrible persecutions — have been carried out in religion's name. Whatever we choose to think of it, we cannot ignore its importance."

Torn with emotion, I cannot sit still, but spring to my feet, and begin to walk up and down the room, fighting the despair and helpless fury that is eating at the core of me. Of a sudden I whirl upon him.

"Religion!" I stifle a sob I cannot control. "That religion should stand between two people who love each other — who cannot live without each other — who were made for each other! Do you believe in religion, Grandfather? Do any of the really intelligent, thinking men we know believe in religion?" My face becomes a tragic mask. "Is this thing called religion going to be allowed to ruin my life?"

"You take this too seriously, Temple," says Grandfather. "As I told you the difference in religion was not their only objection — " He catches himself, quickly, and begins to talk more rapidly, diverting the channel of the subject, as if he would give me time to collect myself. "A moment ago you asked me if I have a religion. I have, and here is my creed. . . ."

He hesitates, and as, overcome, I do not answer, he continues, slowly, and thoughtfully. For the moment I am vaguely interested, despite my smarting spirit, for Grandfather seldom gives his views on religion, which he avoids as a dangerous topic.

"I believe in one God, the Creator of the Universe," says Dr. Franklin, quietly. "That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped; the most acceptable service we can render to Him is doing good to His other children. The soul of man is immortal and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion, and I regard them, as you do, in whatever sect I meet with them."

I am still silent, and he goes on, there in the flickering candle-light, with the rain pattering on the window-panes, and an occasional rumble of thunder echoing in the night.

"As to Jesus of Nazareth, I think his system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw, or is like to see; but I apprehend it has received several corrupting changes, and

I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity. Though it is a question I do not dogmatize on, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble. I see no harm, however, in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as it probably has, of making his doctrines more respected and more observed; especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme takes it amiss, by distinguishing the unbelievers in His government of the world with any peculiar mark of displeasure.

"I shall only add, respecting myself, that, having experienced the goodness of that Being in conducting me prosperously through a long life, I have no doubt of its continuance in the next, though without the smallest conceit of meriting such goodness."

He falls silent, and I, upon my part, turn to the nearest window, and stare unseeingly into the stormy night. My throat is choked with emotion, my breast clamped tight with pain. I am not going to marry Cunégonde, after all. It is incredible, that, but true. I love Cunégonde, and she loves me, but she shall never belong to me. The Brillons' decision is final, I know, and impossible of appeal. And with the same cruel clarity I realize that Cunégonde would never marry me without her parents' consent, even if that remote contingency were possible, which it is not.

I stand there, then, with my little world fallen all about me — the bright-coloured bubbles I have created, like all illusions, pricked and gone forever.

Of a sudden I feel a hand on my shoulder. His excellency has risen noiselessly, and come to my side.

"You mustn't take it too hard, boy," says Grandfather, gently. "There's other girls, you'll find. No matter what happens, there's always other girls. . . ."

"I love her!" I tell him, desolately.

"Perhaps you do, Temple. I'm sure you do. But the wound will heal, in time. Time heals everything. And perhaps it is for the best — "

"I love her . . ." I tell the lonely candle-light, the rainy, cheerless night.

He puts an old arm around my shoulder.

"Don't look like that — boy! It hurts me when you look like that . . . you're a Franklin, Temple, and a man. You're going to do big things in the world, yet. But to become a great man — to have lived life in its fullest sense — you must have suffered. This experience is only part of that suffering you must undergo at life's hands. Realize that, Temple, and you will have gone a long way toward the attainment of understanding, and maturity."

"I love her," I repeat, dully. "Grandfather — can't you realize that I love her? That nothing else matters — can ever matter?"

He is silent, and we stand there together; what he is thinking of, I cannot tell . . . of his long-mourned baby Francis, of his wife Deborah, or perhaps even of the mother of my Father. Of any or all of the disappointments he has gone through, in the long life he has lived. He is the patriarch, is Grand-

father, the joys of whose family are his joys — the woes, his woes. I look at him, and I see that he is very old and tired. A tinge of love and compassion touches me, sharply, so that I am almost unmanned; for his sake, not my own.

Giving his old hand a firm squeeze, I suddenly leave his side, and go steadily toward the door.

"Where are you going, Temple?" asks Grandfather, quietly.

Anywhere, I think. Anywhere, to be alone with my pain. . . .

"Goodnight, Grandfather," I tell him, from the door. My face is pale and hard. As hard as the frozen soul within me. ". . . Goodnight."

He looks at me for a long time, then says goodnight, and walks back to the table. As he lowers his weary body into the chair, it seems to me I hear him mutter his never-failing phrase of optimism:

"*Ça ira!* . . . it will go!"

8. It is pouring steadily, as I row, hatless, down the Seine in Le Ray's boat. The very heavens seem to be weeping with me. Only I have not yet wept. There is an inferno of pain and despair raging within me, but the flame can find no outlet. I am all fire within, but ice without.

Through the driving rain I hasten, as if pursued by devils; oblivious to the storm or to the night. Oblivious to everything but my personal tragedy. And so I come to *Moulin Joli.*

The gardens are sodden with rainfall, and I am

wet through as I approach the Stair of a Hundred Steps, ghostly in the gloom. A flash of lightning splits the firmament, and the great house stands out above, dark and forbidding. All dark it is, except at one spot; there is a light burning in a window above the very terrace upon which I spoke to Blanchette that night. It is Cunégonde's window.

Slowly, like a man in a dream, I mount that great white stair in the rain, my eyes riveted to that gleam of light behind the blinds. Step by step, up the hundred steps, on the path that was once the stairway to Paradise. Slowly I mount, as if to a rendezvous, and as I reach perhaps the nineteenth flight, the light suddenly vanishes, and I as suddenly come to an abrupt halt.

For a long time I stare at that dark patch which is her window, trying to visualize my Cunégonde behind the blinds. Is she thinking of me? Is she, perhaps, weeping alone up there in the dark, with the thunder crashing out-of-doors? Cunégonde is deathly afraid of thunder-and-lightning . . .

Slowly I cross to that corner against the balustrade where she and I once sat together, and I seat myself, mechanically, oblivious to the rain. Hoping that she might perhaps throw wide the blinds, and look out into the night. Praying that a stroke of lightning might strike this proud Stair of a Hundred Steps, and destroy it forever. Destroy me with it. But I know that the lightning will never strike here, and I know that she will never throw open those blinds. . . .

A wave of longing, a tide of despair, sweeps over me; I fling wide my arms, as if she could see them.

"Cunégonde! . . . Oh, my God, *Cunégonde!*"

The wind lashes the rain down the great staircase in sheets, and muffles my cry, and spitefully whisks it off into the night. Then it is that, for the first time in many years, the tears come, and I weep, horribly, as only a man can weep. Whether it is for my lost love, or for my lost illusions, it is hard to say . . . the loss of pride is often a bitterer blow than the loss of life, itself.

Afterward — long afterward — when the rain and wind have blown themselves out, and the first stars begin to peer out of the freshly-washed face of the sky, I go down through the gardens to the river, and my boat. I am very wet, and very disconsolate, like a dog returning home with his tail between his legs.

At the river-bank, I look back, and catch just a glimpse of the great white stair, and the outline of the house, at its head. For a moment I stand there, immobile.

"Good-bye, Dream!" I whisper, softly. And again wistfully, "Good-bye. . . ."

It is a romantic gesture, the gesture of youth. It is, nevertheless, a faintly satisfying one.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

Concerning The Love Hunters — And Him Who Tiptoes In Boudoirs

THE week that follows is no less than ghastly. I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, I cannot address anyone, nor bear to be addressed. There seems to be a raw wound within me, which is continually bleeding, and the blood it gives forth seeps into my heart, and curdles it with bitterness. I feel that I shall hate the Brillons — particularly Madame — all the days of my life. And know that I shall never forget Cunégonde, nor stop longing for her.

My vanity, mayhap, has been wounded deeper than my heart, but bruised vanity is often-times more acutely painful than a genuine hurt to one's affections. The more painful, perhaps, since it is the shorter in duration. It is the brief sensations of life which are the most memorable.

The Brillons, I have heard, have all left for Nice, there to recover from the reaction of the violent emotions Madame Brillon has undergone in making the decision, Grandfather tells me. I listen disdainfully to this, and wonder as to the state of Cunégonde's feelings. There is no word from her, however, and I am deeply disappointed, although I have not really expected that she would write.

Two days later, Grandfather sends me to Touraine, to spend a month with the De Chaumonts, who have a Château there.

2. I am back in Paris, returning by diligence with Le Ray. The De Chaumonts, with exquisite tact, have been most kind. It has been a month of hunting and fishing, of visiting village fairs. A most enjoyable month, ordinarily, but this time, a month of moody silence; thirty days of long solitary walks in the forest, days of heart-ache and memory-laden nights. But the month is at an end, and the sharp edge of my emotions rather dulled. An ache remains, but not the same ache as at the beginning. A resentment is in its place — a spirit of bitter antagonism toward the Brillons — toward Cunégonde, toward Grandfather, toward life, itself.

I am in Paris, and Grandfather receives me back home as if I have never been away, and makes no further comment on the past. Instead, he one day presents me with a gift of a new cabriolet.

Perforce I take up the threads of my old routine. There is more time on my hands, however, since summer is upon us, and most of the fashionable folk in the country, upon their estates. I am just as well pleased, as I dread facing too many people.

Life seems stale and dull; Paris empty and meaningless. I find I have too much time to think, and I dread being alone with my thoughts, so I take the only way out. I seek the company of other girls, other women.

This is a period upon which I am not too anxious to dwell. It is a not abnormal reaction, this, of chasing any and all women, when one has lost the only one who matters. It is as if one would revenge him-

self on the sex, this seeking forgetfulness in the arms of many, loving none. It is a period of late, clandestine nights, of feverish days.

I am back with my friends again — with Le Ray and De Keralio — with Le Veillard and Ste. Olympe and De la Neuville — all of whom welcome me back to their unholy brotherhood with uproarious welcome. There are wild carousals in the apartments of one or the other. I drink much — more than is good for me — and race my cabriolet through the midnight streets of the town, to ridiculous *rendezvous* at the *Italiennes,* the *Comédie Français,* or in the *Bois*. Again I am one of the woman-hunters, but this time I am leader of the pack. And because I really care for no woman, and am contemptuously indifferent to all, I find the quarry eager to be caught.

3. There are a few who stand out.

Actresses and midinettes, of course. And the petulantly dissatisfied wife of a milliner, and the gay young widow of a soldier in the wars. Blondes and brunettes, ash-blondes and red-heads and all hues between. All are fair game, in all classes and castes, in this good city of Paris, the hunter's Paradise. Fair game, and willing. Only too willing.

The Frenchmen take love frivolously, but follow its rules with the utmost seriousness. It is a field where all tricks are permissible, all manners of approach excusable. The end is less important than the manner of gaining that end. It is a game of men's

wits against women's; and a game in which the cleverer — the woman — never lets her cleverness get the best of her.

The English take the game of love seriously, the Italians heavily, the Germans sentimentally, the Russians sadly, the Spaniards violently, and the Orientals either lyrically or matter-of-factly. The French take the *grande passion* frivolously, as it should be taken, with the attitude that sex is Nature's joke on humanity, and that man must accept that Divine jest in good grace.

That, at any rate, is the philosophy of the pack I lead, but it is not, at the moment, my own. I am seeking forgetfulness. To me this is a business at once serious and light. Fortresses to be stormed impetuously, and once sacked, as lightly relinquished.

4. There are a few who stand out, in that they are not mere partners for a night.

There is Gabrielle.

She is a youthful marquise, who has a quick wit, a caustic tongue, and although not exactly beautiful, has a certain charm for men which is not hard to understand when one knows her. Her husband is preoccupied with his mistresses, whom he regularly changes with the seasons, and she experiments with any lover whose wit can be as cutting as her own, if only he insults her often enough. To *Madame la Marquise,* Paris is a laboratory, and men but specimens therein, for her dissection. She has an insatiable curiosity about the masculine sex, and a most

direct — and to some, most unaccountable — manner of satisfying that curiosity.

If a man pleases Gabrielle, she will admit him to her *boudoir* — and beyond — whether he be prince or page. Few men, however, please her, for few have the intuition to give her back insult for insult. She is inordinately proud of her charms, and almost primeval in her passions. Every man who strives for an understanding of woman should at some stage in his career know a Gabrielle; but there are few Gabrielles, and I am glad that I have crossed swords with her in the eternal duel of the sexes.

There is Hjordis.

She is half Norwegian, half Swedish, and bears the name of an island and a noted house. She is blonde, is Hjordis, with eyes of icy blue, and a disdainful, wilful mouth, with pale-red lips. She is long-limbed, and languid. She takes long strides like a man, and walks with the proud carriage of a Viking woman. Her hands are cool, as is her glance, but both are deceptive; there are hidden volcanoes in those languorous eyes, and coals of fire in those hands. An ice-woman she appears to be on the surface, this Viking girl with a head of hair like a golden casque; when her hair is down, it hangs to her knees, and she is sheathed in it, like a white flame in a golden scabbard.

She never makes a move to hold a man, does Fräulein Hjordis, for she knows he will always come back. Like most Nordic women, she is repressed, and

eternally self-possessed; but when she loses herself, it is with an abandon that no Latin can hope to equal. She is not a coquette, is Hjordis, if she chooses to give, she gives. If not, there is no power on earth which can melt the ice of her will. She is like a Viking woman in a Viking tower, is Hjordis, and she has let down her rope of golden hair, that I might scale the turret, and learn the lore of the North. . . . She has gone back to her Scandinavian *fjords,* has Hjordis, leaving me the legacy of a memory which I shall never lose.

5. There has been, then, Gabrielle and Hjordis, not to mention the Viennese countess who regarded Venus as her goddess, and herself as a priestess of her favourite deity. And, most ironical jest of the gods, the girl Yolanda, whom I had once thought to abduct, and had come onto the adventure of the sedan chair instead.

She is still under the "protection" of St. Montaire, is Yolanda, but De Keralio has sought her friendship, and found it, and he must needs take me calling there one fine afternoon. She knows about the fiasco of the sedan chair, does Yolanda, and is much amused, in her voluble Italian way. She teases me about my mistake, and flirts with me from beneath heavily shaded lashes. Before we leave, she manages to whisper an invitation to return, which, I gather, before long, is more than my friend the Chevalier has ever obtained.

I return, after her performance at the Coliseum,

that night; she has informed the Marquis, she tells me, that she is too tired to sup with him, but is rather ill, and for bed. So she is . . . but not quite as he thinks.

She is devilishly attractive, as all the red-haired Florentines are, but she is a bit too voluptuous, and even vulgar, for my fastidious taste. I do not quite succeed in altogether masking my scorn and indifference, for she seems to sense it, and does her best to pique my interest. I am about to take my leave, bored, when the Marquis himself unexpectedly arrives, and inserts his key in her door. On the instant, alarmed, she hides me in a clothes-press — a most uncomfortable and stuffy closet, at that — and from a convenient knot-hole I witness his unsuspecting entry.

St. Montaire is come, full of solicitude, thinking her ill, and is accompanied by a footman bearing flowers and a huge basket of delicate viands and a cobwebbed bottle of ancient wine. Instead of being properly thankful, Signorina Yolanda flies into a rage with him for coming against her wishes, rates him soundly, and sends him grumblingly but almost apologetically packing, with his lackey hard on his heels. She is careful to see that their cargo, however, remains.

It is all I can do to restrain my laughter, and as their footsteps recede, and a carriage is heard rolling away, I step out into the room. Yolanda is imperturbable, and is already emptying the basket, and setting a small table. She then invites me to sup with

her, and the table is so tempting that I accept the invitation. She has strewn the flowers on her great bed.

There is a small three-branched candelabrum on the table, the only lights in the room. The Marquis's advent and departure has so aroused my risibilities, and the irony of the situation so amused me, that I resolve to remain. Whereupon we sup, and Yolanda sings for me a Neapolitan love song; and we empty the bottle between us. And it is a most superior wine, and I am almost tempted to make friends with St. Montaire for the sake of his cellar. But when the candles eventually gutter out in the candelabrum, we do not replace them, and I realize that I shall never roll the Marquis's family vintage on my palate again; only a cad will make friends with a man upon whose preserves he has poached. That is one of the laws of our pack.

For I am still of the pack, in my eternal hunt for forgetfulness. A forgetfulness I never seem able to achieve.

6. It is perhaps a month later that Grandfather speaks to me. I have been uncomfortably aware of his worried regard, at times, and have as often pretended an indifference that I did not feel, for, much as I tell myself to the contrary, Grandfather's opinion of me and my affairs has much weight with me. I know he is sorry for me, and I cannot bear to be pitied. So I pretend ignorance, and follow my own wild course.

In the end he corners me, however, and I must face the music.

"You are being a very foolish boy, Temple," says he, sadly.

"Indeed, Grandfather?" defiantly. And I look away, secretly feeling that I appear sufficiently tragic and dissipated, and half-hoping he will report this to Madame Brillon. Youth loves to dramatize itself. "What difference does it make, sir?"

He observes me thoughtfully for a moment, before answering. Studies me, keenly.

"It is not pleasant to see a Franklin making a fool of himself, my boy."

I redden, perhaps as he intended me to do.

"I'm only human, Grandfather!"

"Unfortunately, we all are. But don't think that I am censuring you, Temple. I merely wish to call to your attention the fact that you are going about things in the wrong way."

"What things?" I fence.

"Cunégonde. If you've chosen the means you have, with which to forget her and your disappointment, the arms of other women will hardly be your panacea. That is an old and ever-used method, but it seldom works. You are no exception. But I only mention this to you because I am worried about you. Such a course as I understand you are following can only hurt you in the end, physically and morally."

"It's my affair, sir . . ." sullenly.

"It *is* your affair, which is why I am anxious.

Come, Temple — return to your senses! You must forget Cunégonde, and think only of your future — of your career. In time, if you do not seek her, the right girl will come into your path."

"There will be no other woman for me!" I declare, blackly, although I hardly believe that, myself. "I am through with women, forever!"

"So I observe!" says Grandfather, dryly, and I have the grace to flush.

"These others —" I explain, rather lamely, "mean nothing to me at all. I would be as well pleased if I never saw another, again!"

"Interesting, if true," comments his excellency, with his quizzical smile. "No, Temple — you're human, and you'll always be attracted to the fair sex. But that's no reason why you should surfeit yourself, now. It will give you a false, distorted perspective, and may indirectly result in spoiling your real romance, when that happens along. The thing for you to do is to forget Cunégonde, and put your mind on other things. You will be surprised to discover how time has a habit of healing even the most grievous of wounds."

"It's easy to say 'Forget Cunégonde!'" I retort. "But how? That's the question."

"Very simply done, if you have half the intelligence I think you have," replies Grandfather. "Reason yourself out of this infatuation — for infatuation is all I am inclined to think that affair ever was, now that I have thought it over dispassionately. You were both too young to know your

own minds, and Madame Brillon's objections, I am beginning to believe, were quite sensible."

I check an angry retort, with reference to Cunégonde's mother, and seek another outlet for my ire.

"What would you have me do? Join a monastery?"

"Rather than pursue the wild and gainless course you are now following — yes. But that is unnecessary. All I ask you to do is lead a more normal life. Try to get interested in someone else, if you can. It is better that you devote your time to one woman, if you must to any, than to all. There is no telling where such reckless indiscrimination may lead. Besides, you have my dignity to think of, as well as your own, and that of the country we have the honour to represent. I've enemies enough back in America, as you know, Temple, without letting your thoughtless behaviour put additional weapons into their hands, and enable them to rally more."

I am silent for a moment; somehow, I had never thought of this, so wrapped up have I been in myself.

"Take your cue from the French," counsels Grandfather. "All of the men of our circle, probably, lead double lives of one sort or another. But all of them have a sense of the fitness of things, and are careful not to make themselves conspicuous. The more they are in the public eye, the more careful they are. As my grandson, you are very much in the public eye."

"I am sorry, Grandfather," I admit, contritely. "In my disordered state of mind, I forgot to think

of you, and what I owe to you — and I ask your forgiveness."

"It is freely granted," smiles Grandfather, and places a comradely arm around my shoulder. "I know what it is to be young, Temple. And much as I regret the errata of my own youth, I would most likely repeat them, if I were given the opportunity to relive my life. Try the remedy I suggest: Reason yourself out of this infatuation, and, at the same time, try to become interested in somebody else. Someone with intelligence, of course, as well as charm; someone who has something to give."

"Do you then advise me to take a mistress?" I ask, bluntly, as I think back to that day in the garden when I read aloud Grandfather's *Advice To A Young Man.* I cannot help smiling at the memory, and Grandfather notes my expression.

"Not necessarily," says he, smiling in his turn. "But if you feel the society of a lady is necessary to you at the moment, and might help you to forget yourself, and your problem, then do so by all means. Although I should not like to see you cheapen yourself by entering into an association with someone who is not worthy of your youth and mind. Women can be angels, but they can also be harpies; remember that."

Again I think of his *Advice,* and chuckle.

"An old woman, by preference, sir?"

He immediately understands the reference, and winks, almost imperceptibly.

"Not too old, my boy — nor yet too young. A

young girl might fall in love with you, and I would not have you run the risk of breaking a young girl's heart. A slightly older, worldlier woman, is too clever to let her affections become involved beyond repair."

"You intrigue me strangely, sir," say I with interest, and sit down, preparatory to listening, and, mayhap, asking a few questions on this most interesting subject. "Say on, Macduff . . ."

Grandfather's eyes twinkle, then he shakes his head.

"You are a young rogue," says he, and walks to the door. "I am afraid I have said far too much already. In faith, I have expatiated so on your affairs that I fear I over-flatter you, so that you must be quite in love with yourself."

"If I am, at least I am true to myself," I return, promptly, "which is more than one can say of a woman."

"That is wise," comments Grandfather, nodding his head. "For he that falls in love with himself will have no rivals."

And still wearing his cryptic smile, he softly leaves the room, a more jovial, more human Dr. Franklin than I have seen in many a month.

He always manages to have the last word, does my grandfather.

7. So, as abruptly as I began my headlong career as a chaser of the fair, and a tiptoer in boudoirs, I end it; I am tired of women and their charms, of

their little artifices, and their innocent treacheries. I have drunk too deep at the fountain of pleasure, and I am satiated, as a child is who has indulged too much in sweets, and cannot stomach another.

The truth of the matter is that I was not cast in the mould of a libertine, and wear with an ill grace the bacchanalian laurel of a roué. Despite the shattering of my illusions — if they can yet be said to have been shattered — I am still an idealist, eternally a pilgrim on the road of life, seeking the shrine of romance. Always, for me, there must be some one woman, a living ideal of all my hopes and dreams and desires. And when I have found that one woman, there shall be no other.

It is a strange trail, my road, leading me through many experiences — a road by whose side I dally often to taste of mysterious delight. For although all women are fundamentally alike, yet is each a separate and different mystery in herself. It is a winding, tortuous road, my road, and there are many shrines by the road-side, at which to worship; and the goddess of each seems to be more attractive than her sisters. Yet ever do I arise from my knees disappointed and unsatisfied, and continue on my romantic quest, seeking the last, and most glorious shrine of them all.

There was Cunégonde. I thought I had found it, in her, but now, in the inmost corner of my heart of hearts, I know that I had not — and had had that inner knowledge all along. The tumult of my emotions has died down, my crushed vanity has risen

again from its ruins; for I am young, and such is the law of youth. And now I see more clearly. And the madness has passed, and the pain. And only a faint regret for what might have been, remains, like the twinge of an old wound.

Another bend of the road lies just ahead, and, mayhap, a new shrine. The end of the road is veiled in mist. . . .

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

Wherein Is Determined The Conclusion That Women Are Books, And Men Their Readers Be

GRANDFATHER, after many attempts, persuades me to visit the Brillons with him, and at last I do so.

Madame Brillon kisses me, is very motherly, and takes me aside at the first opportunity.

"You must not be angry with *mon mari* and myself, Temple. We are both very fond of you, and expect big things of you. But your marrying Cunégonde — it was not to be. There are so many things which would have made it unwise, dear boy. . . . Cunégonde was very disappointed, of course, as I imagine you were. But she has recovered, and so, I am sure, have you. Forget it all, and let's be friends."

"I am honoured, Madame," I tell her, coldly. So Cunégonde has "recovered" has she? "If it will at all relieve you, I can tell you that I have resigned myself to my ill fortune. I trust neither *Mademoiselle* nor yourself will suffer any further anxiety as to my own state of mind."

"That's a sensible young man!" says Madame Brillon, with obvious relief. And she kisses me again. "You have always been so like a son and brother to us, Temple, it was unimaginable to picture you as anything more."

I bow, silently, and at that moment Cunégonde

herself makes an appearance. She perceives us, and comes directly over. As she does so, her mother, with a keen look at each of us, gracefully withdraws, and joins Grandfather, who is already at the chess-board, awaiting her with impatience. Cunégonde takes my arm, and suggests that we walk out upon the terrace. Silently, I follow her.

By the light of the moon, she carefully examines me.

"You've changed, Temple," says she, gravely, as if we had been separated for years. "You look thinner, and rather haggard. It becomes you."

"Indeed?" I return. "You, I find, are much more delightful-looking than you ever were. Permit me to felicitate you!"

"That is nice of you — *très gentil.* But it is not true, Temple. I have suffered very much. How much — no one shall ever know!"

"How very interesting!" I comment, coldly. I am, unaccountably, definitely angry. Why, it is hard to say.

"Were you very much upset, Temple? I was. But I rather expected it, you know."

"You — *what?*" I gasp, taken aback.

"Rather expected *Maman's* refusal. For it was all *Maman,* of course. *Papa* does anything she asks, when it concerns Aldegonde and myself. . . . I never really thought she would give her consent. I as much as told you so, if you'll remember. But I dare say you don't . . . you're so impul-

sive and impetuous, Temple; you never stop to take other people's feelings or thoughts into consideration."

"Thank you," say I, shortly.

"Don't be angry, Temple!" exclaims Cunégonde, and she puts her hand on my arm. "I'm very fond of you — fonder almost than of anyone I know. But I don't really think I ever loved you, dear. You realized that, didn't you?"

"No," I answer carefully, in a stifled voice.

"I was englamoured by your charm, Temple — for you've any amount of charm, you know. And by your popularity and your social position, and all that. But I honestly don't think I ever really loved you, Temple — as a future wife should love her prospective husband . . . *Maman* and I talked it all out."

"You did, did you?" I comment, calmly. And inadvertently glance indoors. Ah, Cunégonde — Cunégonde! "*Madame votre mère* is a very wise woman, Cunégonde."

"I'm glad you see that, too — and aren't angry at her, and at me!" cries Cunégonde, giving my arm a little squeeze.

"I see — many things . . ." say I, in a curious voice. Poor Cunégonde, who could be talked over so easily! Poor Cunégonde, who can with such facility be tricked out of the romance which is her birthright! There is real pity in my eyes, as I look at her, and it suddenly occurs to me to wonder why I am not thinking "Poor Temple!" The next moment, I un-

derstand why. I have fallen out of love with her. It only needed this glimpse of her true character to metamorphose my feelings toward her completely. "No, I'm not angry at you, Cunégonde. Doubtless you were both right. And I am certain, now, that you never loved me. I should have seen that before."

"But you did love *me,* didn't you?" asks Cunégonde, archly.

I look into her soul, and see many things.

"I worshipped the ground you walked on," I assure her, soberly. That I should ever have loved this grown-up child!

She looks pleased, but a little dubious.

"Are you sure you're not saying that to be nice?" she wants to know, in a small voice.

"Cunégonde! — How can you possibly imagine such a thing?" I smile. "Do you think that I was pretending? That, perhaps, I wanted to marry you for your money?"

She smiles in her turn.

"Of course not, Silly! I know you really loved me, and that you will never love anyone so much again."

"No?" politely.

"*Non,*" says Cunégonde. "For you're the intense, idealistic type, Temple. When you really love a woman, you'll love her for always."

"You intrigue me, strangely!" I drawl, politely.

"But it's true. You see, Temple — I know you better than you know yourself . . . *mais oui,* I do!" She is very earnest, there in the moonlight —

and very conscious of the pleasing effect of her new gown, and the more grown-up style of her *coiffure* — a concession, I take it, of Madame Brillon's. "In fact, Temple, I know you so well, that I'm worried about you!"

"You flatter me, Cunégonde."

"But I do worry, I tell you. Why, Temple Franklin — you've black circles under your eyes! Tell me the truth; have you been dissipating?"

I consider in my mind what would most please her, and decide, almost immediately.

"I'm afraid I have, Cunégonde. Night and day. I wouldn't admit it to anyone but you."

A light of positive pleasure comes to her eyes; as I had guessed, it is the supreme compliment.

"*Temple!* You *mustn't,* any more — promise me that you won't!" She is sweetly insistent. "If you really love me, Temple, don't ruin your life like that . . . make something fine out of it. Become famous — a great man, like your grandfather — so that I'll be proud of you."

"So that you'll be able to say, 'He once wanted to marry me, but I refused him'?" I cannot help but murmur, cynically.

"But it would be tr —" she catches herself, quickly. "Temple Franklin, I think you're perfectly horrid! I'm glad *Maman* wouldn't let me marry you — *there!*"

"While I, of course, am driven to despair!" sarcastically. "There's still suicide — you've forgotten that, Cunégonde!"

"Temple!" Her voice holds horror — but also a perverted ecstasy — at the delightful idea of my killing myself for love of her. "Temple! You wouldn't *dare!*"

"Oh, wouldn't I?" I hint, darkly. I am beginning to enjoy this interview.

"Temple — promise me you won't!" She grasps both my hands in hers, and for the first time in several years, the contact brings me no thrill. "I know you can't help loving me, Temple. But you mustn't do anything so terrible — for your grandfather's sake, if not mine! After all, remember that I'm very fond of you, dear. That I'll always be a sister to you." She looks at me earnestly. "I want you always to regard me as your dearest friend . . . to bring me all your confidences — tell me every single thing you do!"

I think of Gabrielle. Of Gabrielle and Hjordis and Yolanda. And I smile. And cannot help forcefully expressing the thought in my mind:

"Lord! What have I done to deserve *this?*"

I can see that she is delightedly horrified.

"You mustn't make a scene, Temple! Control yourself!" She shakes her head, sadly. "You mustn't let yourself love me so much, Temple. Forget me, and fall in love with someone else. You know so many girls!"

"That's a very sensible idea," I agree, cruelly, and rather too quickly, for she looks crestfallen. "It's absurd to go crying for the moon. And, as you say, there's any number of other attractive girls.

What do you think of — Blanchette Caillot, for instance?" I mention the first name that pops into my head.

"Blanchette is beautiful — *and* adorable —" says Cunégonde. "But she's married!" triumphantly.

"All the better!" I aver. "This is France, and in France it seems to be rather fashionable to be in love with someone else's wife. When in Rome, do — but you know the old adage . . . you are right, Cunégonde. I had better proceed to fall in love again as soon as possible. I shall call on Madame Caillot tomorrow!"

She looks at me as if she is doubtful whether or not I am in earnest.

"But Blanchette is too *old* for you!" says Cunégonde, helpfully.

"Only by two years," I tell her. "And that is nothing . . . what is two years? Yes, I shall call upon Blanchette tomorrow by all means. And who knows? — I may fall in love with her!" I regard her quizzically. "Wouldn't you rather I fell in love with someone you knew, than someone you didn't know?"

"No!" snaps Cunégonde, sincerely. Then bites her lip at the admission. "Fall in love with anyone you choose! I'm not your keeper!" She tosses her head. "Men are all alike. . . . Why don't you go ahead and get involved with every attractive woman in Paris?"

"Not a bad suggestion," I admit, and bow. "Now

that you mention it, I shall take the matter under consideration."

"You're — impossible!" flares Mademoiselle Brillon, angrily.

"I have hopes —" courteously, "I have hopes . . ."

With a smothered exclamation, Cunégonde flounces away, and enters the house, certain that I will be on her heels, breathing apologies. Instead, however, I remain outside staring up at the lady in the moon. I smile at her ladyship, wryly, and shake my head.

"The more I think of some members of your delightful sex, Madame — the less I think of them!"

For a long moment the moon and I are in rapt communion, and then I lower my gaze, which falls, quite by accident, upon the historic Stair of a Hundred Steps. I think of that last night I mounted it in the rain. Of how I sobbed out my despair, watching Cunégonde's light; of my departure, like that of Adam driven from Eden; of my parting wistful gesture: *"Good-bye, Dream!"*

I smile, there in the moonlight, half-sentimentally, half-ashamed . . . and after a while, quite simply, I whisper the phrase again, but this time it has an entirely different meaning — this time I am bidding *adieu* to the follies of youth.

I go into the house.

2. The first thought that I wake up with, the next morning, is a rather surprising one. For my first

waking impression is that I have promised someone to visit Blanchette Caillot. I tousle my hair and shake my head, shedding the last remnants of sleep, and suddenly remember that I promised no one this thing, unless it were Cunégonde, and that promise was in jest. But as I dress and breakfast, the conviction suddenly comes on me that paying a neighbourly call would be a very good idea, indeed.

I have thought of Blanchette Caillot often enough the past two months. Have wanted to visit her often enough. At the last moment, however, each time, for some inexplicable reason, I had always changed my mind. Perhaps it was because I knew that I would have to discuss Cunégonde, or perhaps it was some obscure shame in my then wild course . . . somehow, I was certain that Blanchette would see through me, and, for some inexplicable reason, I did not want her to see the truth. Again, whenever I thought of her, I could not help thinking of that unfinished kiss, the mere memory of which yet had an impact to be remembered.

This morning, however, all these things seem inconsequential, and I am suddenly resolved on seeing Blanchette again. Tomorrow, perhaps. By the time I begin breakfast, I have determined to call this afternoon. By the time breakfast is ended, I am already looking for my hat and stick. And so it is that, quite early in the morning, I am strolling under the avenues of great trees which lead to the neighbouring Caillot estate.

It is the first time I have ever called, and I am strangely excited. The servant who answers the door, however, seems to take me for granted, and says that *Madame* is in the garden. She ushers me into a charming blue-and-gold morning-room, and disappears.

Five minutes later, Blanchette, wearing a filmy green which seems to be matched, for the occasion, by the green of her changeable eyes, enters the room, a little golden-haired girl at her skirts, and cordially greets me as if she had seen me only yesterday.

3. We are walking in the garden.

I am carrying a basket, and Blanchette is carrying a sunshade, and cutting flowers which she transfers to my basket. We converse, lightly, and the little girl, Sabine, runs on ahead, chasing small butterflies, a tiny white poodle barking at her heels. She is an exquisite child, Sabine — with features which are her mother's in miniature — and with an expression much too mature for her lack of years. She is given to shy, apparently introspective moments, at times, and others which are golden with the sheer delight of childhood. She is all of five or six years old, and it is amazing to me that Blanchette — herself so girlish and demure — can be her mother; astounding, somehow, that Blanchette should be a mother at all — she who is so child-like, in some respects, herself. Sabine has taken to me, as most children and dogs do — since I am fond of both children and dogs — and I can see that this pleases Blanchette.

Somehow, I seem to want very much to please Blanchette.

We talk of many things, but make no mention of Cunégonde, to my relief. I intend to speak of Cunégonde, but not yet, and I am grateful to her for her tact and understanding.

We speak of people and books and plays. Of Mesmer, who has arrived from Vienna with his secret of animal magnetism, and his bucket of magic iron, around which crowds of fine folk swarm to cure themselves of their ills, and to find new thrills; Mesmer is a frequent visitor to our house at Passy. We speak of the new balloons, and of the young English "macaronis" from London, who parade in the Bois and on the Champs Élysées, and who have started the fad of wearing enormous hats like the women's towering *coiffures*. We discuss Cagliostro, who with his canary waistcoats, plumed hats, and Egyptian Freemasonry is the rage of the town.

Blanchette is well-read. She considers Ovid superior to Seneca, and she delights in translations of Shakespeare, of whom she is very fond. She has not read Casanova's writings, nor does she approve of what she has heard of them, and him. Of Smollett and Fielding, likewise, she is ignorant. But as they, like Casanova, are contemporaries, this is not strange.

We talk of a hundred and one things, evading personalities, and all the time I am acutely conscious of the infinite charm of her, and am wondering why

I have not come to seek out her friendship long before.

The Caillot house, like the Hôtel de Valentinois, is on a hill overlooking the Seine, with its grounds running down, like ours, to the river. Monsieur Caillot, who is fond of boating, has had constructed a tiny boat basin, or inlet, from the river into the foot of his grounds. It is a very attractive spot, overhung with drooping trees and bordered by stone benches, and there is a wide stone staircase which leads up from the water to the land. The oblong-shaped pool, or basin, is encircled by a low rail of chains, and there are great iron rings imbedded in the walls to which to secure the small boats of his miniature pleasure fleet. At the head of the pool, just above the water-stair, is a little Doric summer-house, its columns shining whitely against the dark of the greenery.

Blanchette and I stroll into this summer-house, then, and seat ourselves, still talking, while little Sabine plays on the miniature quay with her poodle-dog. We are still studiously avoiding personalities, and as we talk, I am entranced by the effects of sunlight and shadow on Blanchette's gown, and the slim hands playing with a flower on her lap. It is very quiet and peaceful here, with the dark emerald of the trees shading the darker green of the pool, and the long shafts of sunlight shining through, pattern-like.

Of a sudden there is a small splash, a tiny, gurgled cry, and an excited barking. As we both spring to our

feet, we see that the frantic little poodle is alone on the bottom step at the foot of the quay, and there is a growing ring of concentric circles in the water nearby . . . Sabine!

Taking it in lightning-like, I act too quickly to even hear Blanchette's anguished cry. In another moment I dash out of the summer-house, bound down the stair, and dive — all in one movement, it seems to me — and am groping under six feet of water for the child. Another instant, and my eager hands have found her, and I am kicking myself to the surface, with Sabine in my arms. A few leg-strokes, and then the water-stair, with Blanchette kneeling on the bottommost step beside the dog, with such sheer fright and anxiety in her eyes as I never hope to see in human face again.

As I emerge, and she tears the child from me, an excited gardener appears at the basin's edge, followed by an assistant, who sets up a shout. Oblivious to them, however, no sooner do I regain the land, than I forcibly take little Sabine from her mother's arms, dash with her up the stairs and, laying her face-down upon the grass, begin a hasty but effective work of resuscitation. Luckily, I have been well taught in these matters by Grandfather, who is himself an excellent swimmer, and familiar with every phase of the water.

Blanchette is sobbing, but biting her lip to repress her sobs as she watches her child with fascinated eyes. As I rhythmically work the little girl's arms back

and forth, the water gushes out of her mouth, and the air into her lungs; then with my own mouth against hers, I blow great drafts of air down her throat. A few moments later her throat works, her eyes flutter open, and Sabine begins to cry. I drop my arms, exhausted but triumphant, and Blanchette snatches her child to her breast, crooning over her almost hysterically. Gently, I take Sabine back and, arising, begin to carry her through the garden toward the house. The gardener and his assistant have run ahead for help, and already we hear excited voices approaching. For the moment we three — Blanchette, the child and I — are alone.

With a little sob deep down in her throat, Blanchette seizes one of my hands, and presses upon it a kiss burning with gratitude. Her eyes are heavy with unshed tears.

"You have given me back my child, Temple — the only thing I love in all the world!" she exclaims, intensely. "How can I *ever* hope to repay you?"

For the briefest space following that impulsive declaration made from the depths of a mother's heart, we look into each other's eyes — startled, seeing each other with new eyes. The next moment a wave of colour dyes her neck and cheeks, and I hastily look away, as I flush, unaccountably.

Before either of us can say more, the excited servants are swarming down upon us. Attended by a chattering little mob, we walk up to the house, Sabine and myself dripping wet; Blanchette walking

beside me, with a hand tucked in my arm, and the other holding Sabine's tiny hand. Little Sabine, recovered from her scare with the quick forgetfulness of childhood, gives me a sunny smile, and wraps a soft little arm confidingly around my neck.

It gives me an odd little thrill, that baby gesture. But there is a greater thrill than I have ever known before in all my life, already vibrating on the chords of my heart. For, simultaneous with Blanchette's impulsive kissing of my hand, and the naked, revelatory look that we exchange immediately afterwards, knowledge comes to me which changes the entire course of my life. . . .

4. I have hurried home, and changed to dry clothes, and hurried back. My hands are hot, my eyes are bright, and there is a great wonder in me — an overwhelming gladness that surpasses all gladnesses I have ever known before.

Blanchette is waiting for me in the blue-and-gold morning-room. A servant has told me that Sabine is in bed, none the worse for her experience, but I have ears for no one — eyes for no one — but Blanchette.

We are alone, silently facing each other across the spacious room. She is standing under a great crystal chandelier, and is very pale, but in her eyes, too, is a gladness akin to mine — a brightness which speaks of the same inner tumult. Her smile is half-expectant, half-frightened. I walk over to her, take both her hands in mine. I am still staring into her eyes, entranced by what I see.

"Blanchette . . . !" My voice is thick and unsteady with emotion.

"Temple . . ." She raises her chin bravely, her eyes proud with happiness.

"You know . . . ?" I ask, softly, as if I cannot believe this thing, myself.

"I know," says Blanchette, simply, and does not look away; but I can feel her hands trembling.

"I love you," I tell her, as simply. "I am not in love with you, Blanchette Caillot. — I love you. That is something different. You are the first woman I have ever loved in my life. . . ."

"I know," says Blanchette, gravely.

". . . It came to me like a vision — as if a great veil were torn apart, and I saw the truth, at last. It *is* the truth, Blanchette. There is no greater truth than love — than my love for you . . . I love you."

She smiles at me — a smile I have never seen before.

"I know," she repeats once again. "But it is good to hear you say it. Oh, the days and nights I have been wanting to hear you say it, *mon cher!*"

"You knew?" I demand, incredulously.

"But of course!" says Blanchette, quietly. "What woman would not know? It made me very sad, but it made me very proud."

"Sad, because of Cunégonde?"

"Sad because of — life — *mon ami.*"

We stand there, holding hands like children, and through our hands rush currents of joy and tender-

ness, from one to another. . . . I am like a man in a dream.

"I see it all, now," I tell her, in tones of genuine awe. "I loved you from the moment I saw you at the Brillon's — from the moment I heard your voice in the garden — nay, from the moment I held you in my arms in the sedan chair! From the very first I adored you, Blanchette. But it was not until you kissed my hand today that my eyes were opened, and I knew the truth . . . that my passion for you is a *grande passion,* not a little one; the one great love that comes to a man but once in a lifetime!"

"I mustn't listen," says Blanchette, dreamily, "but I want to. I like to hear you tell me this thing."

I look into her eyes.

"We are favoured ones, you and I," I tell her, humbly. "The little passions, Blanchette — the passions of most men and women — are affairs of propinquity, of understandings and appreciations which grow slowly, steadily. But the truly great passions, my dearest dear, are recognitions. I see you with clear eyes, and I know that you are my woman — that you have been mine and I have been yours since the beginning of all things — and that you will be mine and I will be yours until the end of all things. And beyond."

"And beyond . . ." echoes Blanchette, softly, with quivering throat.

"Among the countless millions of the earth," I avow, wonder-struck, "we were made each for the

other — your life for mine, my life for yours. I want to sing, Blanchette, I want to pray — I want to thank God for this thing He has done to me; but I cannot. I am mute, a sealed earthen jar, unable to give out the joy that is within me. But you know."

"I know," admits Blanchette. "*Je sais tout.*" She smiles. "You see, I love you, too. But you know that."

I nod. Yes, I know. Love like ours is like that. I am no longer wildly happy; instead, I am filled with an infinite content — an ecstatic satisfaction which transcends mere happiness. I drop to a knee, and she places one of her hands on my hair — strokes it.

"I have found you, Blanchette. All my life I have been looking for you, and at last — unbelievably — I have found you."

She does not answer. I put the softness of her hand against my cheek.

"Always I have been a man without a creed of life — without a religion, Blanchette. Henceforth you are my creed — my love for you is my religion. You are my goddess, and there are no other gods beside you!"

"Temple! You must not blaspheme!" cries Blanchette, very low; happy and troubled all at once.

"'Tis no blasphemy to love," I aver. "If 'tis a sin to love you, I am prepared to spend the rest of my life — and all the other lives to come, if there be any others — paying penance in the most hellish of Purgatories!"

"You must not say such things!" implores Blan-

chette. "Get up, *cher* . . . we must talk of other things."

There is tender urgency in her voice. I kiss her hand, and rise.

5. We have talked of many things, Blanchette and I. Sitting at either end of a gilded *fauteuil,* touching one another only with the caress of a glance, we have talked. And it is amazing how much we have said with how few words; astounding, the amount of mutual understanding between us two.

"Once I thought I loved my husband," says Blanchette, simply. "Now — feeling for you as I do, I am not sure that I ever loved him. But I might have if he had not taken the course he did." She hesitates. "Like a plant, a woman needs constant attention, Temple. To flourish, she needs affection and devotion. When she is sure of her husband's love, perhaps so much of it is unnecessary. But when she is not sure of him, she needs it all the more . . . for to a woman, love is the first thing in life, and all other things secondary; to a man, love is not his chief interest. There is his career, his ambitions; love is merely a matter of relaxation. A woman realizes that, but she wants every bit of her husband's attention when he has it to give, for her own. My husband — " again she hesitates, "has preferred to give his elsewhere."

I see this is a tender subject with her, and attempt to divert it.

"A man," I observe, "always wants to be the first love, and a woman, the last."

"Exactly," she nods. "But when a man once has won a woman, he thinks he is sure of her, since he possesses her, and runs after those he does not possess. All men are fickle."

"Perhaps," I agree. "But *I* shall never love another woman but you, darling. Even if I were lucky enough to possess you — if there were no barrier between us and our happiness — I should never love another."

She smiles her half-sad, half-mocking smile.

"It is sweet to hear you say so, *mon amour*. But I should not really expect such fidelity from you, for, after all, you are human, and you are a man. Loving you, I should be happy to have what little of you I could. That is the tragedy of being a woman."

We smile at each other; at once happy in the knowledge of our love, and sad in the knowledge of the hopelessness of it. We are careful not to touch hands. I think of a bit of rhyme my Grandfather Franklin once wrote, and repeat it to her.

"Women are books, and men the readers be,
Who sometimes in those books erratas see;
Yet oft the reader's raptured with each line,
Fair print and paper, fraught with sense divine;
Tho' some, neglectful, seldom care to read,
And faithful wives no more than bibles heed.
Are women books? says Hodge, then would mine were
An Almanack, to change her every year!"

It so fits Blanchette's own case, that she cannot resist laughing, and, somehow, the solemnity of our mood is lifted from us. We smile at each other, in blissful understanding, living the luxury of the moment, and studiously avoiding thought of what might lie ahead.

"If you had married Cunégonde, what then?" asks Blanchette, mischievously, of a sudden.

I cannot forbear chuckling. That I should have ever dreamed that I could actually care for Cunégonde! Why, I feel that I can be more happy merely in possessing Blanchette's regard, than in possessing Cunégonde, in reality. I think of that night of rain and weeping, on the Stair of a Hundred Steps . . . my smile fades.

"There was a night," say I, ruefully, "when I thought my heart was broken, in verity! What blind fools we men can be!"

"You'll know it when your heart breaks," Blanchette declares, out of her feminine wisdom. "If you remember, I told you that once before. . . ."

"So you did. You said that when my heart would break — if ever it did — I would hear it crack!" And I cannot help but laugh, and she joins me. "That were impossible, now, Blanchette, for no longer do I own a heart. It is yours, now and forever."

"But you are not heartless, altogether," says Blanchette, softly, "for you have mine in your keeping, in return." Her face grows grave. "My heart — and my honour."

We look at each other, regarding one another's souls, for the second time that day. I wet my lips with my tongue; they are dry.

"And your honour, Blanchette," I agree, steadily.

"I love you," says Blanchette, bravely, "but we can never be other than the dearest of friends — only friends, *mon cher.*" She hesitates. "Not that I am afraid to give where I love, or because I am a hypocrite. I am honest with you, Temple, and always shall be — I swear it . . . but there is Sabine, Temple. Besides yourself — even more than yourself — I love her more than aught else in this world. You two are all that I love — all my life. And for her sake, *mon cher ami* — I must be true to myself. My honour is my child's." She eyes me, piteously. "Do you understand, Temple? — say you understand!"

I take her hand in mine.

"I do understand, Blanchette. I understand that you are the noblest, sweetest, purest woman in all the world, and I honour you for it. Your will, my dearest, shall ever be my law."

I squeeze her hand, and rise. And soon I take my leave.

All the way home, however, and beyond, I am haunted with the memory of an unfinished kiss. . . . It is sad that one cannot control one's memory. And profitless.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

How A Violin Moans And A Kiss Is Completed

I ONCE had a friend, and she was very wise, with the wisdom that God gives to all beautiful women; that very knowledge which teaches women who are beautiful to keep their wisdom a hidden thing — for men are not over-fond of women who are both beautiful and wise. Indeed, they prefer to believe that all beautiful women are somewhat lacking in intelligence — arguing that the bestowing of one gift and the withholding of another is but Nature's way of balancing her book of human equations.

To me, that is a fallacy, for Nature herself is a woman and, being a woman, is unfathomable in her actions. Being temperamental, it is her whimsy to give out favours with a lavish hand to one, and to be cruelly indifferent to another. But being a woman, too, she is inconsistent, so that to those of her children whom she has denied beauty or brains, or both, she gives a certain indefinable charm which is invisible to all, perhaps, but the one man; which is why no man has yet been able to understand what his friend could see in the woman of his choice. Which rule, luckily for the propagation of the species, works both ways. . . .

To return to this friend of mine who was both beautiful and wise: she had a personal credo, upon which she was fond of expatiating at any given

moment — (which was the only reason for which I ever doubted her wisdom!) For my friend, though neither young nor old, had been young once, and remembered her youth. And looking at those of her friends who were no longer young — but were unaware of the fact — she conceived a horror of ever growing old. When last I knew her, very young was she, still, and for all I know so she is now. She had a secret, of course, but her secret was her very own, and as she told it me in confidence, I cannot betray it if I would. Nor would I if I could, for if all women remained eternally young, it would be a dull world indeed, for what is life without variety?

This fair friend of mine had a credo, then, and as a codicil, an opinion. And her opinion was this; that love is like a wrinkle, for the farther it burrows into the skin, the deeper its roots strike into the most sensitive parts of the heart. Now this is an ambiguous opinion, but so are all the opinions of women ambiguous — even those of the fair and wise ones. And this friend of mine was very fair indeed, and wise beyond her sex; and she had the courage of her conventions!

2. What is this thing called love? I lie down to sleep, and the eyes of her are smiling at me through the darkness, so that there is no sleep for me, nor aught but a terrible impatience, waiting for the coming of dawn. I awake in the morning, and the music of her voice is in my ears, and the hours until

I am to see my loved one again stretch out before me intolerably like a vista of years — of decades, of centuries, of aeons.

There are nightmares by night, so that I awake, panic-stricken and in a sweat, having dreamed that I have lost her. There are daydreams by day, in which I wander for hours, building air castles, with an eternal smile on my face — a meaningless little smile of secret bliss.

There are soaring heights of exaltation — when I am imparadised in an unreasoning happiness. And there are bottomless depths of despair, when all is black and valueless and life is mockery. There is no middle way; for there is no contentment in love — no quiet satisfactions or spiritual acquiescences. Love is like that. . . .

Love is hunger. An appetite that is unappeasable, that is all-devouring. Love is a craving that constricts the stomach, and shrivels the heart. A longing that weakens the body and betrays the soul — that enslaves the will and masters the brain so that there is no pride in me, only humility.

Love is hunger, and I am starving in the wilderness. Love is madness, and I am lunatic with joy. Love is suffering, and I am wracked with agony. Love is longing, and I am sick with craving.

Love is purification, and I am born again . . . love is the resurrection and the life.

3. I visit the Caillots daily, now, and before long, nightly. As the days pass, however, only my morning

visits are made openly, and these more infrequently, while the nocturnal visits are clandestine. For Passy is a small community, and like all small communities, rife with gossip. There must be no risk of involving Blanchette's name, no matter how innocent our friendship may be, so I take steps accordingly. Luckily, we live very near to each other, and it is a simple matter to slip away, at night, under cover of the darkness, and go by devious unfrequented ways to the Caillot garden.

By day, when I go openly, I bring gifts for little Sabine — sweets, fruits or toys — and we become great friends. Very shortly I become exceeding fond of Sabine, not only because she is her mother's child, but because of the sweetness and unusual precocity of the little girl, herself. She sits on my knee, prattling, sometimes for hours, while Blanchette and I listen, amused and content, looking at each other . . . what infinite pleasure there is in the mere exchange of glances!

Sometimes Grandfather — who evidently highly approves of my new friendship and suspects nothing — accompanies me on my morning visits, and plays with Sabine while I turn the pages for Blanchette as she plays on the organ and sings for us. Very often, too, Grandfather Franklin brings his violin, and plays with her, as sometimes do I, myself. For, like Grandfather, I can play on the harp, the guitar, and the armonica, as well as the violin, and the pianoforte. Where Grandfather is fond of carols and Scotch airs, however, I am fond of ballads. And

like Blanchette, have a weakness for Mozart and others of our contemporaries.

These morning meetings, then, are innocent enough, and the meetings at night are just as innocent, despite their being more or less clandestine. Usually Blanchette and I meet at the little Doric summer-house at the boat basin near the river. It is quite secluded, here, and always dark and inconspicuous, even on moonlight nights, when shafts of silver percolate through the branches of the overhanging trees to lie, like molten bars of *argent,* on the face of the pool.

We sit here for hours, talking, and holding hands —but no more. It is amazing, the infinite variety of things we find to talk about. And, again, we can sit for hours at a time in utter silence, and perfect communion, watching the moon climbing the ramp of the sky, or the starlight on the Seine. Sometimes I tell her about the stars, having learned much of their names and characteristics from Count Cagliostro, who is a frequent visitor to our Legation; and we weave fantastic romances about some particular planet or constellation. Blanchette has a lively mind, and a glowing imagination; when she is with me, she lets it expand, and unwittingly displays to me the treasures of her fantasy. Once, she tells me that I am the first person she has known to whom she has ever so opened her mind. Her husband not only does not take the trouble to understand her, but could not understand her if he would.

Sometimes she talks of her husband. He is like a

grown-up child, says she, dispassionately — with the restless desires of a man and the spiritual intellect of an adolescent. He has lost interest in her as a woman long since, and is continually involved in new amours in the town, which he attempts to hide from her with clumsy subterfuge. When he has taken up with a new wench, he always feels uneasily guilty, at first, and displays that guilt by showering Blanchette with gifts which she accepts with a repugnance which it is hard for her to conceal. At the conclusion of each of his vulgar intrigues, he attempts to show her some unusual attention, which she neither accepts nor rejects. He no longer loves her, says Blanchette, but is proud of her as one is proud of a valued possession or a museum piece. He loves to show her off to his friends and business associates, and can be very jealous, as such men very often are. Blanchette, however, has been so impeccable in her conduct, and so obviously indifferent to his masculine friends, that his jealousy seems to have died.

We talk then, by the hour, and sometimes I play to her softly on my guitar, and sing to her — or we sing together, very low. It is a romantic idyll, this life we lead, and I am careful not to mar it by a false step, for I know that Blanchette has tacitly put me on my honour.

The days pass, and the nights, and our intimacy grows, but we no longer dare say with our lips what our eyes avow. Our silences are longer, now, and more strained, and no more do we hold hands, nor does she let me lie with my head on her lap, as she

strokes my hair. There is a tension between us, as if we have been playing with fire, and have but just become aware of the crackling of the flames. For there is the memory between us of an unfinished kiss. . . .

It is a most wonderful, most mysterious thing, the love of Blanchette Caillot, and myself. Blanchette, woman-like, is utterly content with the present state of affairs, for all I know. As for myself, I do not know my own mind.

Only Le Veillard — Louis-Guillaume — who is my dearest friend, suspects the truth. He is a distant kinsman of Blanchette, and has found me there of a morning several times. He is a silent, taciturn sort, is Louis-Guillaume, who says little but thinks much; intensely practical, and immovable as the Rock of Gibraltar when once he has made up his mind, but a faithful, most loyal friend, nevertheless. He is fond of Blanchette and, although he disapproves of me as being flighty and irresponsible, I have an idea that he approves of my affair with Blanchette, both because he knows she is lonely, and because he knows she is good for me. He is outspoken and critical more often than not, is Louis-Guillaume; short, stocky, strong as a bull, and rather shy when with women. At times he irritates me profoundly, and even more often, I fancy, do I annoy his own conservative sense of the fitness of things; but we love each other like brothers.

4. It is the evening of the ball given by our neighbour Monsieur de Boulainvilliers, in honour

of the betrothal of his pretty daughter, Mademoiselle de Passy, to the Marquis de Tonnerre. Our household has been very intimate with that of the Boulainvilliers, and Mademoiselle has long been a favourite of Grandfather Franklin's. Indeed, he has often had her sit on his knee, and made extravagant love to her, calling her his flame, his favourite, and his love, as all the neighbourhood knows. At the news of her coming betrothal to the Marquis of "Thunder," Madame de Chaumont, our landlady-hostess, teased Dr. Franklin with a remark which is being much repeated: "Alas!" said she, "All the lightning-rods of Monsieur Franklin haven't been able to keep the thunder from falling on Mademoiselle de Passy!"

It is a gay affair, and many of our friends are there, including the Brillons and the Caillots.

Cunégonde is present, looking fairly radiant, with Monsieur Paris in close attendance. To my surprise, she gives me a brilliant smile, and is about to signal me to come over to her, when I pretend not to notice, and join in an animated conversation with the young Marquise de Lafayette. When Blanchette arrives, a vision in blue and silver lace, I greet her cordially, but guardedly, pay my respects, but do not keep to her company, for fear of arousing comment.

In order temporarily to forget the woman I love, thereby protecting her, I turn my attention to Cunégonde. She is seated in an alcove with Monsieur Paris, who is so attentive to her, that a surprising

twinge of jealousy touches me, although, in truth, Cunégonde no longer means anything to me at all. He is almost openly holding her hand, albeit she is using her fan to good advantage, and it irritates me that he should be permitted this liberty with a hand that once I considered my own. It is a ridiculous conceit, this, but truly masculine.

I suddenly look up, and become aware of the fact that Blanchette is watching me. I colour, for no reason that I can think of, and she immediately shifts her gaze. Can Blanchette be jealous? I am so disturbed by the thought that I cast discretion to the winds, and determine to reassure her. Whereupon I make for her, where she sits encircled by a small circle of attentive gallants, and as I do so, the violins strike up for dancing.

With scant ceremony, and mumbled apologies, I make my way to her side.

"I hope you haven't forgotten the dance you were so kind as to promise me, Madame Caillot," I announce, smilingly, as I offer my arm.

It is evident that several others were begging for dances just as I arrived, but Blanchette plays up.

"I thought you had forgotten, yourself, Monsieur Franklin, and was about to punish you by giving it to another!" She rises, her little court falls back protestingly and we advance upon the floor.

Other couples are taking their places for the figure. It is a beautiful sight, there by the light of a hundred candles, with the long line of bepowdered and bejewelled ladies, and equally brilliant-

plumaged gentlemen, going through the evolutions of the lancers.

As we come together for the first time, I whisper to her, smilingly.

"I have something to say to you . . . when can I see you?"

She smiles back, her eyes mocking.

"And I to you . . . on the terrace just after this dance. Lead me out immediately the dance is ended."

So we dance, and we pirouette and circle, and I feel the soft coolness of her fingers in mine, and the soft slimness of her slender waist, and we smile politely with our lips, and make love with our eyes. And once I catch a glimpse of Le Veillard, watching, and it seems to me that I see him frown; and I resolve to speak to him of it, later.

The dance is ended, at long last, and we stroll through the crowd chatting lightly, and of a sudden, as we pass a vacant embrasure, Blanchette's fingers tighten on my arm, and she whispers "*Ici . . . !*" So we stop here, instead of going out upon the terrace, which, perhaps, is just as well.

We sit here, then, and pretend to talk small talk.

"You are very lovely tonight," I tell her, soberly. "You are the most beautiful woman in the room. The most beautiful woman in Paris. In France. In all the world."

"And you," she dimples, adorably, "are very gay tonight, and brave indeed in your satin and

ruffles. I'll warrant there's many a jealous eye watching me at this moment."

"Jealous, indeed!" I riposte. "What woman wouldn't be jealous of you, angel? She weren't human, if she were not!" And I look deep into her eyes, despite my effort to appear debonairly impersonal. "I love you!"

She blushes, and chides me with her fan.

"Please be serious, Temple. I have something to tell you."

"And so have I," I return, and catch her fan.

"What is it?"

"I love you and love you and love you!" I whisper ardently. And as a couple pass, gesture toward an old painting, hung in the embrasure, and criticize it aloud. "A charming conception, that — Madame — but the light on the profile — and the faun . . . there, they're gone! What do you think Monsieur Caillot would do if I suddenly seized you in my arms, and kissed you, Blanchette? Would he call me out?"

"Do be serious!" says she, looking away, and she looks up again, quickly. "Have you spoken to Cunégonde, Temple?"

I shake my head, frowning imperceptibly. She notes the scowl, nevertheless, and eyes me keenly.

"Do you still care for her — even a little — Temple?"

I eye her squarely.

"Not in the least, darling. Whatever was between us, is dead . . . if there ever was anything real."

She gives a little sigh of obvious relief, much to my surprise.

"You evidently haven't heard . . . Cunégonde is engaged to be married — to Monsieur Paris."

I stare at her in surprise, then turn abruptly, and seek out Cunégonde with my eyes. A dozen vivid memories flood my brain as I watch her, and their ghosts, perhaps, show upon my face, for Blanchette leans forward, concern in her voice.

"Don't look so stricken — Temple."

I stare at her blankly, then laugh.

"I look — stricken?" I shake my head, and am prepared to give a vigorous denial when it seems to me that I catch a gleam of jealousy in her eyes — that I can see pain at the corner of her lips. I suddenly rise to my feet, determined to settle this thing once and for all. "Please come outside with me, Blanchette . . ." I offer my arm. *"Please!"*

She looks at me uncertainly, and I can see indecision in her eyes. Then, as if making up her mind, she, too, rises, and takes my arm. There is a French window nearby, leading to the terrace, and I open it, let her precede me, follow her out, and close it behind me. The terrace is momentarily deserted, and there is a loggia at one end, very dark and shadowy. Taking her arm again, I literally hurry her along until we reach this sheltered point, where we are practically invisible to prying eyes, if any there be.

Blanchette looks up at me in surprise, but before she can protest at this summary behaviour on my part, I take her into my arms. Hold her tight.

"It is high time we came to an understanding, Blanchette — a real understanding!" I declare, fiercely.

Her breath comes short and quickly.

"Temple — what do you mean?"

"Just this . . . I love you, worship you, adore you! I must tell you that, first — or *burst!*"

"Temple! . . ." Her voice is close to my ear. "When I saw you look at Cunégonde — I thought . . . you see, I was afraid you still loved her, and would be hurt when you knew about her and Monsieur Paris!"

I laugh, almost joyously.

"*Darling!* All happiness to Cunégonde with her Monsieur Paris, *mon adorée* — and all happiness, too, to — myself!"

She draws back a little, puzzled.

"What do you mean?" She attempts to free herself. "Let me go, Temple . . . someone may see. We must go back. . . ."

"What if someone does see?" illogically. "Look here, Blanchette — do you really love me?"

She smiles her sad, mocking smile.

"Do you need to ask that?"

"I do. You've been very cold to me lately, dearest. What am I to think?"

"What do you want to think?"

"That you love me, too. Only a hundredth as much as I love you . . . that would be enough."

"But I do, silly boy!"

"Then prove it!"

"Prove it? — But how?"

I hold her closer, and the perfume of her mounts to my brain.

"Kiss me, Blanchette. . . !"

She struggles, futilely. Relaxes.

"Not here, Temple! Someone will see!"

"Kiss me!"

"Please, Temple — another time . . . I can't!"

"You mean — you don't want to?" There is a note of pain in my voice. "You've been — playing with me?"

"Temple . . . I — I'm afraid to . . ."

"Why?" inexorably.

She lifts her chin, bravely.

"Because I love you. I love you, and I do not dare." She touches my cheek with her soft fingers, tenderly, a pleading note in her voice. "I am only a woman — and human — Temple. Pity me!"

The moaning of the violins comes to us; the sad, sweet strains of a waltz. We stand there, rigid, in the darkness, cheek to cheek.

"Why not spare *me* a little pity?" I demand, bitterly. "I, who am hungry for you — and must starve!"

"Don't say that, Temple! It hurts." She hesitates. "Don't judge me too hardly, *cher*. I love you, and I will be honest with you . . . it is not the thought of my duty to my husband that stands between us; I owe him no duty, fidelity not at all! But there is Sabine . . . you know how I feel about Sabine. And you and me."

I bury my face in her neck. And she strokes my powdered hair, as I speak, bitterly.

"You are to sacrifice the best years of your life — for the sake of an abstract ideal of whose very existence Sabine will never know?"

"I am a good woman, Temple . . ." says she, piteously.

I loosen my grasp of her, of a sudden, and raise my head from her shoulder.

"You are that, my dear. And I am a dishonourable brute!" I drop my arms to my sides. "I entreat your forgiveness, Blanchette. Only there is a madness on me, because I love you so. The knowledge of your love for me, alone, is far more than I deserve," humbly. "I think it is best that I go away, Blanchette. Perhaps to England, to visit my father; he has lately written, asking that I come."

"You will go — for long?" says she, very low.

"A few months, perhaps. I do not know." I look away. "It will be, perhaps — for the best. I must learn to discipline myself. Seeing you, my dearest one, makes it all the harder . . . I cannot help it, but it is so."

"You would go away," says Blanchette, softly, "for love of me?"

"It were best," say I gloomily, and as I speak, I know that this is so.

Of a sudden her hands go to my shoulders, and her arms begin to creep about my neck. I stare at her in amaze, and see that there are tears in her eyes.

"Then take your kiss, *mon cher*—" says she. "Your good-bye kiss. . . ."

For a moment I hesitate, and she lifts her lips. And as I am only human, after all, I sweep her into my arms, at that, and seek her lips. We kiss, and all the fervor and longing that is in me seems to swell up out of my heart through that kiss, into hers, and Blanchette goes limp in my arms, and clings tight, and we are as one. . . .

Our kiss is ended . . . not our first kiss, but our first finished kiss—and she lies on my breast, does my Blanchette, and my heart is pounding to bits within me.

"We must go in," I mutter, thickly.

"You are not to go away, yet," murmurs Blanchette. "You are not to go away before seeing me."

"I shall leave for London tomorrow," say I. "'Twere better."

"You must not go without seeing me," she repeats, fiercely. "We must talk . . . I must prove to you, *mon coeur,* why I must keep my ideal unsullied for Sabine."

"There is nothing to prove," I tell her, quietly. "The Fates have spun their web, and we have been caught in it, you and I . . . we are trapped."

"You mustn't say that!" she whispers, with a catch in her voice. "You frighten me when you say that!"

I kiss her cool white shoulder.

"I would kill myself rather than frighten you."

"You are selfish," says Blanchette, of a sudden.

"All men are selfish. You would go off to London, where you can forget me — for men can always find a way to forget — and leave me alone with my thoughts. That is cruel."

"I shall never forget you, *chérie*. That were not possible. And it is best for both of us that I go."

The violins are moaning their last rendition of the waltz, and the darkness is athrob with sadness.

"You must not go, yet — " says she, pleadingly. "I need you — your friendship — right now. Promise me you will not go."

She is in my arms, this woman whom I love more than life itself, and she is pleading with me. It seems almost like sacrilege that she should stoop to plead with me; I promise. I promise, joyously almost, for what allure has England for me with Blanchette left behind? And the Fates spin another strand.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

Of A Letter From London And A Rendezvous At Nine

"THE *Speech of Miss Polly Baker before a Court of Judicatory, in New England, where she was prosecuted for a fifth time, for having a Bastard Child;*" I read aloud, and glance around Grandfather's dinner table. It is a large and congenial party, this, and Madame Helvétius is present, sitting between Grandfather and the Abbé Morellêt, and so, too are the Brillons, Paul Jones, Beaumarchais, the Lafayettes, and the Caillots.

I give a second glance at the Caillots, and Blanchette smiles at me. But everyone is smiling, for that matter, for Caron de Beaumarchais has but recently read a translation of Dr. Franklin's now famous *Speech of Polly Baker,* has brought the French translation with him tonight, and now, that dinner is over, has insisted that I read it aloud over Grandfather's protests. It is an amusing bit of work, and I am nothing loath to read it for the entertainment of our guests, most of whom have never heard it before.

"*— Which influenced the Court to dispense with her punishment, and which induced one of her judges to marry her the next day — by whom she had fifteen children!*"

Laughter cascades around the table, and Madame Helvétius pinches Grandfather's cheek with a murmured "*Coquin!*" while he presses Madame Bril-

lon's hand, and looks like a very mischievous old angel. The company leans forward, expectantly, as the servants unobtrusively bring on the second dessert. I clear my throat, take a gulp of wine, and proceed; as far as I am concerned, the only person present is Blanchette! I am in high spirits, and as I read Polly Baker's fervoured pleadings, I assume all the airs and graces of a lady of her station, much as if I were a play-actor, which causes much amusement, so that Caron de Beaumarchais swears he'll put me in the *Italiennes,* and Grandfather smiles more than cryptically.

"'*May it please the honourable bench to indulge me in a few words: I am a poor, unhappy woman, who have no money to fee lawyers to plead for me, being hard put to it to get a living. . . . Abstracted from the law, I cannot conceive (may it please your honours) what the nature of my offence is. I have brought five children into the world, at the risque of my life; I have maintained them well by my own industry, without burthening the township, and would have done it better, if it had not been for the heavy charges and fines I have paid.*

"'*Can it be a crime (in the nature of things, I mean) to add to the King's subjects in a new country that really needs people? I own it, I should think it rather a praiseworthy than a punishable action. I have debauched no other woman's husband, nor enticed any youth; these things I never was charged with; nor has any one the least cause of complaint against me, unless, perhaps, the ministers of justice,*

because I have had children without being married, by which they have missed a wedding fee.

"'But can this be a fault of mine? I appeal to your honours. You are pleased to allow I don't want sense; but I must be stupefied to the last degree, not to prefer the honourable state of wedlock to the condition I have lived in. I always was, and still am willing to enter into it; and doubt not my behaving well in it; having all the industry, frugality, fertility, and skill in economy appertaining to a good wife's character.

"'I defy anyone to say I ever refused an offer of that sort; on the contrary, I readily consented to the only proposal of marriage that ever was made me, which was when I was a virgin, but too easily confiding in the person's sincerity that made it, I unhappily lost my honour by trusting to his; for he got me with child, and then forsook me.

"'That very person, you all know; he is now become a magistrate of this country; and I had hopes he would have appeared this day on the bench, and have endeavoured to moderate the Court in my favour; then I should have scorned to have mentioned it, but I must now complain of it as unjust and unequal, that my betrayer, and undoer, the first cause of all my faults and miscarriages (if they must be deemed such), should be advanced to honour and power in the government that punishes my misfortunes with stripes and infamy. . . .

"'But now can it be believed that Heaven is angry at my having children, when to the little done

by me towards it, God has been pleased to add his divine skill and admirable workmanship in the formation of their bodies, and crowned the whole by furnishing them with rational and immortal souls?

"'Forgive me, gentlemen, if I talk a little extravagantly on these matters: I am no divine, but if you, gentlemen, must be making laws, do not turn natural and useful actions into crimes by your prohibitions. But take into your wise consideration the great and growing number of bachelors in the country, many of whom, from the mean fear of the expense of a family, have never sincerely and honestly courted a woman in their lives; and by their manner of living leave unproduced (which is little better than murder) hundreds of their posterity to the thousandth generation!

"'Is not this a greater offence against the public good than mine? Compel them, then, by law, either to marriage, or to pay double the fine of fornication every year. What must poor young women do, whom customs and nature forbid to solicit the men, and who cannot force themselves upon husbands, when the laws take no care to provide them any, and yet severely punish them if they do their duty without them; the duty of the first and great command of nature and nature's God, increase and multiply; a duty, from the steady performance of which nothing has been able to deter me, but for its sake I have hazarded the loss of the public esteem, and have frequently endured public disgrace and punishment; and therefore ought, in my humble opinion, instead

of a whipping, to have a statue erected to my memory!'"

There is a storm of applause, particularly from the ladies, who are evidently much in sympathy with the views of Miss Polly Baker, and therefore more indirectly, of Grandfather Franklin. The gentlemen, on their part, are much taken with the idea of Dr. Franklin's proposal to tax bachelors for their evasion of the responsibilities of marriage, but not of its delights. A warm discussion soon begins, of which Grandfather is the bland but unwitting storm centre.

Only Blanchette and myself do not take part in it, of all around our hospitable board. Instead, we steal furtive glances — or, rather, I do, while Blanchette steadily averts her gaze with that easy poise which all women, being natural born play-actresses, have, even when their emotions are perhaps at the boiling point. In the soft candlelight, her half-exposed bosom slowly rises and falls, and her long-lashed eyes glisten like new-washed stars.

2. The wine finished, we gentlemen join the ladies in the drawing-room, and I seek out Blanchette as a bit of steel seeks out a magnet in the dark. To my surprise, she is cordial, but cool, and an altogether different Blanchette than any I have ever known. She chats politely, but impersonally, and if it were not for a certain look far back in her eyes — a look of appeal, almost, it seems to me — I should never know this new Blanchette.

She stays much in the vicinity of her husband, and seems intent, strangely, on interesting him alone. He is a rather gross man, is Monsieur Caillot — many years her senior — and with a pompous, self-opinionated air about him which makes me to wonder how any woman, much less Blanchette, can live with him for long. He is not an unhandsome man, but he has very red, sensual lips, which are continually moist, and I can well believe certain stories I have heard of his *affaires* with women much below his own station, which add neither to his reputation for taste nor for discretion. He has restless, blood-shot eyes, and rather waddles when he walks. I have never liked Caillot, and like him less, now, and as I inadvertently study him, something of my contempt and distaste for the man must show in my expression, for I suddenly realize that Blanchette is covertly watching me, and that there is an odd look on her face.

As she discovers that I have surprised her regard, she colours, and of a sudden approaches her husband and tucks her hand in his arm, talking brightly all the while. He pats her hand, patronizingly, and continues his own conversation, and I am consumed with jealousy and rancour. That he should have the privilege of owning this woman!

I am suddenly fired with anger — against Caillot, because I envy him, against Blanchette for her coolness toward me, and against myself for loving this girl. I try to catch her eye, and when I see that she deliberately avoids my gaze, a black misery fills me.

For the rest of the evening I go around wearing a haughty mask, but am sick with hurt vanity, within. I am formally polite to Blanchette — so formal, indeed, that I see her brows lift in surprise — and once or twice am curt almost to the point of rudeness.

I avoid her now, particularly when I see that Blanchette seems to have changed her mind, and would have a word with me. It is not until the evening is nearly at an end, however, that we talk. She is sitting with Paul Jones, listening to the relation of some lively exploit. As she sees me momentarily alone, she unceremoniously sends the Commodore away on some errand, and beckons to me. There is nothing I can do, but obey her signal, and come to her side. I do so, freezingly polite. She invites me to sit down beside her, and I do, offering her my enamelled snuff box, which she refuses.

"Why have you kept away from me all evening?" she demands, in a low voice, studying the toe of her little shoe.

"I never intrude where I do not seem to be wanted!" I tell her bluntly, but stiffly.

She looks up at me, and there is pain in her eyes, as she shakes her head gently.

"Foolish boy! . . . you have so much to learn! Can't you realize that I must be careful? That here, of all places — among the people who know us so well — I must be most discreet?"

I look blank, suddenly realizing the truth with a start. I am thrilled to find she has not changed, in

actuality, but at the same time I am full of remorse at not having understood . . . at having run the risk of drawing attention to our mutual interest, and perhaps compromising her. I flush, biting my lip.

"You're right, Blanchette. You're always right! Forgive me for being such an idiotic fool!"

She smiles her provocative little smile.

"*N'importe* . . . but I almost perished of mortification when you were reading that paper of Dr. Franklin's at the table. You kept looking at me, and I'm sure everyone noticed. *Seigneur!* — I was furious with you!"

"I'm sorry — profoundly sorry!" I murmur.

"You are forgiven," she smiles, taking pity on me. "But you must be more careful next time." She hesitates. "I want to talk to you, Temple — but not here!"

I glance around, cautiously, eagerly.

"There is the garden . . ."

"*Mais non!* Not tonight! *C'est impossible, ici!*" She thinks, quickly. "I must see you soon — tomorrow. There are many things I have to discuss with you!"

"And I!" I whisper, ardently, but expressionlessly. "How about the summer-house at the boat-basin — in the morning? The earlier the better!"

She shakes her head, in negation, quickly.

"Then tomorrow night, at the same place?"

"No — you must not come to our place at all. I am worried — I think my husband must suspect

something; he is being too attentive to me, all of a sudden."

I glance across the room at Monsieur Caillot, who is relating something to Monsieur Brillon with many gestures and to the accompaniment of many guffaws. Without hearing his words, I know that he is repeating a risqué story — and one none too clever, at that, I can wager. I observe him with disgust. There are no excuses for the relation of risqué stories unless they are clever. . . .

"To think that you should belong to — to —" I cannot finish my sentence.

"All marriages are not made in Heaven," says Blanchette, quietly. "Not French marriages, anyway."

"But to think —" I pause, realizing there is nothing more I can say within the bounds of good taste. I change the subject. "Where are we to meet, then?"

"It must be somewhere not too near here," says Blanchette. "Settle on a rendezvous, quickly — Commodore Jones will be back at any moment with the glass of water for which I asked."

I rapidly run over possibilities in my mind, as instantly discarding them.

"A public place might be better," suggests Blanchette. "There is sometimes obscurity in a crowd, and I could dress myself to the atmosphere."

Of a sudden I observe the Commodore enter the far end of the room, bearing a glass of water, and I think desperately.

"Do you know the little tavern near the royal highway at the bridge?" She nods. "It is not far from here, but few who might possibly know you in Passy frequent it. So many strangers come and go there at all times, indeed, that no one will notice you. How is that?"

"Can't you think of a better place?" quickly, as she, too, observes Paul Jones approaching. And as I shake my head, she makes up her mind. "*Très bien* — the tavern, then — tomorrow night at nine . . . once we meet, we need not stay, but can find somewhere to talk."

"I'll be there," I promise earnestly, and arise as the Commodore comes up. "You're an angel to meet me! . . . Good evening, Paul — I had thought you'd play Good Samaritan, and resign to me your *tête-à-tête!*"

"To steal your grandfather's thunder," says Paul, grinning, "if resignation be a Christian virtue, I'm afraid I'm a poor Christian — for I absolutely refuse to resign!"

Whereupon I lower my colours, bow to my lady, and blithely pass on, elsewhere.

3. It is just when I am about to slip out of the house on the next evening, to keep my appointment with Blanchette when Grandfather appears, and asks me to come into the library with him. I am annoyed, but dare not refuse; in fact, I am even a bit alarmed. Can he suspect anything?

He seats himself at his desk, and I see that he has been writing a letter. I stand, impatient, but waiting.

"I told you the other day, Temple, that your father had written me."

"Yes, sir."

"I did not tell you that he wants to visit us here."

I am surprised, and show it.

"When is he coming?"

"He is not," says Grandfather, curtly. "I do not wish him to come, as yet. But here — I shall read you my answer to him:

"*I received your letter of the 22nd ultimo, and am glad to find that you desire to revive the affectionate intercourse, that formerly existed between us. It will be very agreeable to me; indeed, nothing has ever hurt me so much, and affected me with such keen sensations, as to find myself deserted in my old age by my only son; and not only deserted, but to find him taking up arms against me in a cause, wherein my good fame, fortune, and life were all at stake.*"

I listen with mingled emotions; anxious to get away to my rendezvous, but no less desirous of hearing out this letter. This is the first time Grandfather will have communicated with Father in many years, and I think back inevitably to that stormy scene between them in New Jersey on the outbreak of the Revolution, when they parted mortal enemies, and Grandfather took me back to Philadelphia, with him, instead of leaving me with my father, as he had

planned. I think of the years of separation, of the years of Grandfather's silent heartache and humiliation — and of my own resentment toward him for his harshness to Father.

I think on all these things, then, and am silent, and Grandfather reads on:

"You conceived, you say, that your duty to your King and regard for your country required this. I ought not to blame you for differing in sentiment with me in public affairs. We are men, all subject to errors. Our opinions are not in our own power; they are formed and governed much by circumstances, that are often as inexplicable as they are irresistible. Your situation was such that few would have censured your remaining neuter, though there are natural duties which precede political ones, and cannot be extinguished by them.

"This is a disagreeable subject. I drop it; and we will endeavour, as you propose, mutually to forget what has happened relating to it, as well as we can. I send your son over to pay his duty to you. You will find him —"

"I'm going to London?" I break in, eagerly. And pause, as I suddenly think of Blanchette. Much as I would like to go to London to visit my father, I cannot possibly leave Blanchette for such a long period! But there is time to think this out — I intervene again. "Please finish, sir."

Grandfather adjusts his spectacles, and reads on:

"You will find him much improved. He is greatly esteemed and beloved in this country, and will make

his way anywhere. It is my desire that he shall study the law, as the necessary part of knowledge for a public man, and profitable if he should have occasion to practise it. . . ." He skips down the written pages. "*I did intend returning this year; but the Congress, instead of giving me leave to do so, have sent me another commission, which will keep me here at least a year longer; and perhaps I may then be too old and feeble to bear the voyage. I am here among a people that love and respect me, a most amiable nation to live with; and perhaps I may conclude to die among them; for my friends in America are dying off, one after another, and I have been so long abroad, that I should now be almost a stranger in my own country.*

"*I shall be glad to see you when convenient, but would not have you come here at present. You may confide to your son the family affairs you wished to confer upon with me, for he is discreet; and I trust that you will prudently avoid introducing him to company, that it may be improper for him to be seen with. I shall hear from you by him. . . . Wishing you health, and more happiness than it seems you have lately experienced, I remain your affectionate Father.*"

A clock chimes on the mantel, and I bethink myself of my rendezvous. I glance at it, hurriedly, and Grandfather notes the movement.

"You have an engagement, Temple?"

"Yes, Grandfather. Rather an important one."

He eyes me keenly, as I make no further explanation, but asks no questions. Instead, he merely dismisses me.

"You had better keep it, then. We'll discuss your trip to England later."

"Thank you, Grandfather." I go to the door, and turn to bid him good night, and see that he is watching me over his spectacles with a slight frown. I am not to be deterred, however. "Good night, Grandfather."

"Good night, Temple." He sighs, and removes his spectacles, and even as I leave I can swear I hear him mutter his inevitable self-assurance when in doubt: "*Ca ira* . . . it will go!"

4. I find that I am over half an hour late as I pass through the village of Passy, and break into a semi-run as I hurry to the tavern. It is quite crowded, when I enter, and for the first time, as I view the faces of the men present, and the few women, I realize what a mistake I have made in asking Blanchette to meet me at such a place. It is noisy, and resounds with laughter, rough oaths, and filthy jests. Pale with self-directed anger, I search the place for her with my eyes, but no Blanchette do I see. At first I am relieved, thinking that she did not come, after all; then I am alarmed, for Blanchette is not one to break a promise.

Satisfying myself that she is not present, I make my way through the crowd to the fat, shrewd old *aubergiste,* whose husband keeps the tavern, and

who sits enthroned behind the bar. She knows me, and greets me effusively.

"A lady," I whisper, confidentially, "was to have met me here at nine o'clock, and I am late. She would have been well but quietly clothed, and perhaps masked. Have you noted such a one?"

Madame Rataplan gives me an odd look, and turns to gaze with grim lips toward a far corner of the room. I follow her gaze, and see a trio of gentlemen — obviously of much higher station than any others in the room — drinking in a small alcove near the fireplace. Two of them I can see, and they are strangers to me; the third has his back toward us. I glance at Madame Rataplan again, and at the look on her face, a premonition shoots through me.

"Has she been here, Mère Rataplan?"

"I wondered who she might have been," murmurs the old *aubergiste*. "Yes, she was masked, and plainly dressed, but I knew she was a lady at once, and when she asked me for a quiet corner where she might sit and wait for a friend, I put her, alone, in that far corner, there — right next the alcove where those gentlemen are sitting. They were there then, too, you see, and I thought she would feel safer near them." Her lips tighten. "I was a fool!"

I grasp her arm.

"What do you mean? Where is she?"

Mère Rataplan leans forward.

"Gone. She went to sit there, and ordered some mild wine, and evidently took the attention of the gentlemen . . . I watched it all, from over here."

"Yes!"

"One of them tried to speak to her, and insisted on crossing, and sitting by her side. When she drew back, refusing to have anything to do with him, he tried to pull off her mask, and when she slapped his face, as he deserved — he tried to kiss her."

I wheel about, pale with fury.

"Which one was it?"

"All in good time," says Mère Rataplan, imperturbably. "They are still here, and she is gone."

"In the name of God, what happened next?"

"*I* happened next!" declares the elephantine old woman, grimly. "I had been watching, and I was over there in three shakes of a young lambkin's tail. . . . I grasped *monseigneur* by the shoulder — for he is of the quality, I can tell — and pulled him away!"

"What next?" tersely.

"He let go of her, and was about to curse me for my interference, as he recognized me, when I whispered aloud — so that his friends could hear — that the lady's husband was outside, that he was as jealous as any ten men in France, and as terrible when aroused as any twenty!" She grins, at the memory. "At this, his friends intervened, and led him back to their table. The next moment the poor lady — who I could see was pretty frightened — slipped out and was gone before I could say a word to comfort her!"

And this is what I have brought Blanchette into — this common tavern! To be insulted by strangers,

to be publicly annoyed and frightened — a red rage possesses me . . . I grasp the *aubergiste's* arm in a vise-like grip.

"Which of the *canaille* was it? Quick!"

Mère Rataplan is alarmed.

"You will make no scene, Monsieur Franklin? — I am an honest woman, and this is an honest house. . . ."

"Which of the three was it? Tell me instantly, or I shall kill them all!"

"But they are gentlemen — he is a noble, *Monsieur!* And your grandfather, if he knew — "

"If my grandfather should come to know of this, you will never sell wine in Passy again!" I tell her, tensely. "Which was the man who insulted her, woman?"

The quivering old mass of flesh capitulates.

"The one with his back to us — " she falters. "*Mais, s'il-vous-plaît,* Monsieur Franklin, don't let — "

I do not hear the end of her speech, however, for I am already shouldering my way through the crowd to the alcove near the fireplace, murder in my eye.

The trio are conversing gaily as I bear down on them, half-emptied mugs at their elbows, and emptied bottles on the floor. As I near them, wrathfully the one with his back to me gestures toward the nearby alcove in which I assume Blanchette sat — says something which causes his friends to go off into roars of laughter — and raises his flagon to his mouth. It is easy to guess that he is discussing his

erstwhile unsuccessful flirtation, and my fury knows no bounds . . . that Blanchette should have been anywhere near such gentry as these!

At thought of her, the anger mounts to my brain, and as I come up behind them, I seize the unknown by a shoulder, and with a vicious jerk, pull him out of his seat, so that he and the chair fall over backward together, and the wine in his half-raised flagon cascades upon his face and coat.

He lies sprawling on the floor, cursing and raising a hullabaloo, as his two cronies spring to their feet with startled exclamations. My attention is not for them, however, but for the wine-spattered man at my feet, who is crazily raising himself to his own. I spring back petrified with surprise as he stands, and whips out his sword at the same instant. For I recognize him . . . it is the Marquis de St. Montaire!

He faces me, a picture of wine-dripping, dishevelled fury, and threatens me with his blade, despite that fact that I am unarmed. Calmly I fold my arms, and stare at him contemptuously, as his companions spring between us, and a startled, silent crowd gathers around. I am no less enraged than I was before, but it is a cold anger, now, and the recognition of the man brings home to me the knowledge that I must keep Blanchette's name out of this affair — that I must keep cool at all costs. Therefore, much as I wish to thrash the man, then and there, despite the menace of his sword, I control myself.

One of his companions, a moustachioed man of middle age, questions me, in angry astonishment.

"What's the meaning of this — you lout?"

I look him full in the eye.

"I beg your pardon, *Monsieur?*"

He recognizes me to be a foreigner by my accent, and a gentleman by my clothing, and changes his tune.

"What on earth caused you to knock *Monsieur le Marquis* off his chair?"

"Because, *Monsieur,*" I return, gravely, "his face does not please me. To be exact, I did not see his face, being behind him, but I knew that it would not please me even when I saw it — and I find that I am right."

"I'll spit you like a dog!" howls the Marquis, brandishing his sword, and his other friend holds him back, while the tavern room listens in silent awe.

"I would not put it beyond M. de St. Montaire to attack an unarmed man," I observe, suavely.

He gapes at me, in surprise.

"You know my name?"

"It is my misfortune," I admit, and cannot resist smiling, as I think of the last time I saw him — when Yolanda chased him from her room, as I watched from within her clothes-press. My smile broadens to a grin.

"Who the devil are *you, Monsieur?*" demands the moustachioed one.

"The name does not matter," say I and my temper slips. "Call me, if you will, a simple gentleman who would thrash a ruffian who goes about in taverns insulting unescorted ladies!"

"Insulting —" repeats the moustachioed one, and abruptly halts. "You must be — she was —" He turns to the glowering St. Montaire. "I told you not to go over, Raoul — that she must be —"

"Damn your telling me!" snaps the Marquis, angrily. "No man lays hand on me and lives to tell of it! Find out if the English brute is a gentleman, and if he is, lend him your sword. If not, I'll to him with my crop!"

"And will your friend lend me *his* crop?" I ask, insolently.

"For the second time," demands his friend, flushing, "who the devil are you?"

Old Mère Rataplan, who has pushed her way to the forefront of the onlookers, sees fit to break in, as I am silent, debating whether or not to give my name.

"Be careful of what you say, *Monsieur* —" says she, half-respectful, like the good *bourgeoise* she is, and half-resentful, like the good friend she is. "This young gentleman is the grandson of the great Dr. Franklin, of the Hôtel de Valentinois — *le Ministre d'Amérique!*"

I bow, in my best Court manner.

"Temple Franklin, *Messieurs,* at your service!"

"Benjamin Franklin's grandson!" gasps the other. "Then who on earth was —" he catches himself, but I pay him no attention, for I am looking at the Marquis.

That gentleman has dropped the point of his sword, and is staring at me in amazement, and as I

look at him, his face grows black as death. In that instant I know, without a word being spoken, that he knows of the attempted kidnapping of Yolanda, and my part in it. And I could not swear that he has not learned of my night in his Florentine's boudoir! The situation appeals to my risibilities, and I cannot resist smiling, despite the gravity of the moment.

"You seem amused Monsieur Franklin —" stammers the Marquis, in inarticulate rage.

"Indeed?" I deplore, politely. "Perhaps I am."

"You have done me the honour to insult me — grossly — *Monsieur d'Amérique!*" he continues, in a strangled voice, and this time I know that my feeling was correct, and that he refers to Yolanda.

"So I have," I return, easily, and take out my snuff box with the utmost nonchalance.

"This is some ridiculous mistake!" puts in the moustachioed one. "I'm sure that Monsieur Franklin will apologize for the blow. After all, if the lady was a friend of his, his forgetting himself may be condoned. Am I right, *Monsieur?*" He turns to me, questioningly.

"I'm sorry, *Messieurs,* but I have never apologized for an action in my life, and I am afraid it is too late to begin, now. . . . I have the honour to be like my grandfather in that respect!"

"There can be no apology!" says St. Montaire, harshly, balefully eyeing me. "I believe you understand me, *Monsieur!*"

"You intrigue me, strangely, Monsieur Marquis,"

I admit, and smile again, which obviously adds to his fury. "Perhaps I do — understand!"

His two companions regard each other in puzzlement at this interchange, take in each of us, and then exchange meaning looks; they realize there is something beneath the surface. The moustachioed one speaks to Mère Rataplan, who immediately begins to drive the gaping onlookers back out of earshot, much as a fussy old hen shoos away her brood. The four of us are left there before the fireplace, comparatively alone.

"This is a serious matter, *Messieurs,*" says the third man, with a troubled look. "St. Montaire's rank — the official position of Monsieur Franklin — " He appeals to his friend. "We must mend things, *mes amis,* before they get too far. There are others to be considered — diplomatic — "

"Be quiet!" snaps the Marquis, rudely, and he turns to me, sheathing his sword. "I think we understand each other," he sneers. "There can be no apology . . . kindly name your seconds, so that my friends may call upon them!"

Of a sudden the thought of Grandfather comes to me, and his grief and anger when he learns of this thing; the thought of Blanchette, whose name must be hidden at all costs, comes close on its heels . . . suppose she were recognized in the tavern, by some Passy resident? An eleventh-hour caution comes to me, although my instinct is to borrow a sword and fight the hawk-nosed nobleman then and there. I eye him, deliberately, and he grows impatient.

"Make up your mind, *Monsieur l'Américain,*" St. Montaire sneers. "If you are afraid, there's still the crop!"

"That's just what I was thinking," I retort, slowly, the maddening thought of a frightened Blanchette in my mind. "A whipping with a riding-crop is more fitting for such as you than a gentleman's punishment!"

The Marquis fairly shrieks with rage as he hurls himself toward me, but the two others spring between us, and hold him back.

"I'll kill you for that, you Franklin bastard!" he screams, so that it rings to the rafters. "I'll kill you!"

I pale to the lips, and for an instant am as if frozen . . . in that brief space of time I run a gamut of emotions — anger, humiliation, bitterness, shame, and burning anger, again. With an obvious effort, I control myself, albeit when I speak, my voice is thick and unsteady. I address myself to the moustachioed one.

"I shall be eternally in your debt, *Messieurs,* if you should call on my friends in the morning . . ." I hesitate, thinking quickly. "Monsieur le Commodore John Paul Jones, of the Rue Vivienne, and — Monsieur Caron de Beaumarchais, of the Hôtel des Ambassades de Hollande. They will be delighted, I am sure, to discuss arrangements."

The moustachioed one, who introduces himself as the Comte d'Estaing, and his companion as the Chevalier Jean de Cresmonil, bows.

"I shall be honoured to call upon your friends, Monsieur Franklin."

"Enchanted!" echoes de Cresmonil.

We three exchange bows again, as the Marquis, ignoring us, throws himself into his chair, which has been righted, and begins to dab with a napkin at his wine-spattered coat and waist-coat. Then, with a final courteous salutation, I take my departure, in a dead silence.

As I cross the bridge, shortly after, I see their three horses gallop off to Paris.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

On Duelling And Dying And Waiting For Dawn

RETURNING to the Hôtel de Valentinois only to saddle a horse, I make for Paris, and seek out Paul Jones, who, luckily, is at home. He welcomes me warmly, and without preliminary I tell him that I wish him to act for me in a duel. He is at first astonished, and when I tell him St. Montaire's identity, and his connection with the affair of the sedan chair, he goes off into uproarious gales of mirth, until he is so weak from laughter that he can hardly talk. I wait patiently until he is recovered — for this is no laughing matter for me! — then tell him that I have asked the Comte d'Estaing and his friend to call on him, and Caron, in the morning. Will he act for me, and does he think Caron will assist him?

"It's unnecessary for me to tell you whether I'll act for you, or not," asserts the Commodore, warmly. "You know I will. And Caron will be only too delighted — that fire-eater!" He chuckles. "We'll do this up in shipshape style, my boy!"

"Good!" I am relieved. "And mind — not a word of this to Grandfather!"

Paul Jones promises, still chuckling. Then bethinks himself of the business at hand.

"As the challenged party, yours is naturally the choice of weapons. What shall it be?"

"Rapiers, of course. Arrange the details to suit yourself."

"You're in fair shape, Temple? It seems to me I've heard this amorous marquis of ours has a wicked wrist." He muses, thoughtfully, a moment. "By the Southern Cross!" he exclaims, "—he's the fellow who killed that Moldavian baron at St. Germain!" For the first time he looks worried. "Are you sure this can't be adjusted, my boy? If anything happened to you, Dr. Franklin would never forgive me!"

"There's no way out," I tell him. "I must fight him—and I want to fight him!" I am thinking of Blanchette . . . "He may be an excellent fencer, with much more experience, Paul, but I'm younger, have a good wrist, and, fortunately, am light on my feet. I studied in London, and am therefore taught in the English school—but my guard is pretty good."

"Stay on defence, and let him wear himself out," counsels the Commodore, sagely. "Still—I wish you'd let us broach this to your grandfather, first. If it gets out, there'll be a scandal—and we should think of him."

For once, however, I am not thinking of Dr. Franklin. I shake my head, grimly.

"I hold you to your word, Paul. If you wish to withdraw, however—"

"Not a bit of it!" he cries, hastily. "I'll be there, or there won't be any duel!" He puts an arm around my shoulder. "*Tonnerre de Brest!*—We Americans must stick together—"

"Or, most assuredly, we'll all hang separately!" I retort, quoting somewhat incorrectly Grand-

father's famous remark at the Congress, in Philadelphia, on the outbreak of the Revolution. "Don't worry, Paul — I'm not afraid of our friend, the Marquis."

"If anything happens to you," swears the Commodore, softly, "I'll pull his beaked nose and call him out myself. Unless Caron does so before I can get at him." He gives me a bear-like hug. "Damn my eyes!" he exclaims, "but I regard Dr. Franklin as a foster-father — and you as a brother!"

There is moisture in the eyes he mentions, and my own are none too clear or stingless. Of a sudden he bethinks himself of something.

"By the sword of Washington, if —" He pauses. "That wasn't Yolanda whom you were to meet at the tavern, was it? If it were, would he not have recognized her?"

"It wasn't!" I tell him, shortly.

He gives me a quizzical look, and whistles very low and expressively.

"What a lad!" He grins, devilishly, and his grin has that charm which is Paul Jones's and none other's. "Talk about a chip of the old block . . . tell me, is this lady's identity a secret? — Is she, incidentally, a lady?"

"She is," say I, looking him in the eye. "And it is a secret. You will oblige me by not mentioning anything about her, even to Caron."

He gives me a long look.

"Aye, aye — my cockerel!"

And bursts out laughing.

2. I have spent a sleepless night, and rise early, wondering how I can get word to Blanchette. It were the wildest folly to try and see her, now, I know. Casting about in my mind, desperately, I bethink myself of Le Veillard, and immediately send a servant to fetch him to me for breakfast.

He comes, in due time, and without ado I tell him the story of last night's happenings, first swearing him to secrecy. He is amazed, and obviously troubled, but says nothing, for a long while, meditating as I watch him anxiously. He is deliberate, ever, is Louis-Guillaume, and never more so than now.

"You must keep away from Blanchette until this is over, one way or the other," says he, at length. "I'll pay her a visit, after breakfast, and explain why you were late last night, and as much more as I shall consider advisable." He looks at me disapprovingly. "This is a bad business."

"It is none too good!" I respond, lamely. "But what would you? What else could I have done?"

"It was a crazy plan to have her meet you in such a place," he declares. "Criminal, on your part, to risk compromising her name. You're thoughtless, Temple — and I don't know what will become of you!" He scowls. "If Blanchette listens to me, she will never see you alone again!"

"You mustn't say such things to her," I tell Le Veillard, angrily. "I thought you were my friend!"

"It is because I am your friend that I do and will say them!" he retorts. "If you must have a flirta-

tion, why pick on Blanchette, out of the thousands of women you know? She's not that kind — she's different!"

"Of course she's different!" I declare, vehemently. "That's why I love her!" I give him a defiant look. "You don't understand, Louis-Guillaume — this is something bigger than has ever happened to me before in all my life. I love Blanchette Caillot . . . I would lay down my life for her!"

"It looks as if you probably will!" observes Le Veillard, cynically. "*Écoutez!* — Have you told her this? That you love her?"

"Yes . . ."

He gives a low groan.

"Then it's too late. I've seen her look at you, and — " He stops short. "It can't be helped, I suppose. But it's a pity it had to happen to Blanchette."

"What?" I demand, curtly.

"*Rien* . . . nothing!" He shrugs his shoulders in the best Gallic manner. "Where is this breakfast of yours? I'm starved."

"You *would* be!" I retort, bitterly, but he does not laugh. Le Veillard is not like that.

We breakfast with Grandfather, then, who inquires after Louis-Guillaume's family, and rallies me on my lack of appetite. Whereupon I make a pretence of eating, but with little success. At this juncture, luckily, but somewhat to my surprise, Paul Jones and Caron de Beaumarchais are announced; I had agreed with the Commodore to meet them for

déjeuner at the Widow Laurent's. Grandfather hospitably has them ushered in, and orders covers laid for both, although the pair of them protest they have already breakfasted. Nevertheless, they join us at table, explaining they were riding together in the Bois, and decided to drop by.

Neither of the two betray our secret understanding by the slightest sign, but begin an animated conversation with Dr. Franklin, while Le Veillard, listening, eats stolidly, and I eat not at all.

The trio of older men touch on a variety of subjects, and at length the Commodore, with a subtlety I had not given him credit for, brings around the conversation to the practice of duelling. I give him a sharp look, but he ignores me, and Grandfather, unaware of the undercurrents flowing about his board, gives his opinion of duelling, very readily.

"It is astonishing," says he, comfortably, "that the murderous practice of duelling should continue so long in vogue. Formerly, when duels were used to determine law-suits, from an opinion that Providence would in every instance favour truth and right with victory, they were excusable. At present, they decide nothing. A man says something, which another tells him is a lie. They fight; but, whichever is killed, the point remains unsettled."

"But there is one's honour—" interjects Beaumarchis, earnestly.

Grandfather makes a gesture of impatience.

"How can such miserable sinners as we are entertain so much pride, as to conceit that every offence

against our imagined honour means *death?* These petty princes in their own opinion would call that sovereign a tyrant, who should put one of them to death for a little uncivil language, though pointed at his sacred person; yet every one of them makes himself judge in his own cause, condemns the offender without a jury, and undertakes himself to be the executioner."

"But supposing there is a woman in the case, sir," I break in, despite myself. "What if a woman's name is involved?"

"That is another question," says Dr. Franklin, looking on with approval as a servant gives him another helping of fruit stew, honey and rolls. "Some more coffee, Paul? . . . And do try this honey Madame Brillon sent me." He returns to the subject. "Gentlemen are careful how they handle ladies' names."

"But suppose certain circumstances, involving a lady, made a duel between two gentlemen unavoidable?" puts in the Commodore, throwing me a warning glance.

"I can conceive of no ordinary insult to a woman, which would warrant death as a punishment," says Grandfather, blandly. "A good thrashing, perhaps . . . or ostracism would be better still."

"Nevertheless, I think, your excellency, that there is something to be said for duelling," remarks Le Veillard, surprisingly enough.

"There is nothing to be said for it, sir!" declares Grandfather, a bit testily. "It is utter folly!

I'll give you an illustration of why it is so absurd," says he, and his eyes twinkle, as his face relaxes. "Imagine two gentlemen sitting in a coffee-house: One asks the other to favour him by sitting farther from him. 'Why so?' demands the second. 'Because, sir, you stink!' returns the first. 'That is an affront, and you must fight me!' — 'I will fight you, if you insist upon it' agrees the first. '— But I do not see how that will mend the matter. For if you kill me, I shall stink, too; and if I kill you, you will stink, if possible, worse than you do at present!'"

He beams benignantly, does Grandfather, as we shout with laughter — even I, despite my secret turmoil — and the subject of duelling is closed.

3. Breakfast over, Grandfather finds that he has official visitors to interview, and excuses himself. Whereupon Le Veillard follows suit, and takes his departure; heading, as I do not fail to notice, toward the Caillots' house, not towards Paris. This leaves me alone with my two prospective seconds, and we walk out into the garden, where we shall not be overheard.

"Comte d'Estaing and the Chevalier de Cresmonil called upon us this morning," says Beaumarchais, almost immediately. "The Commodore, luckily, was already at my house."

"You will act for me?" I ask, anxiously.

"I should have annihilated you, if you had overlooked asking me," says Caron, promptly. "Paul and

I will make you perhaps the best two seconds in all France!"

"In all Europe, you mean!" adds Paul, complacently. "That is, if there will be a duel."

"What do you mean?" I ask, suspiciously.

"This," says Caron, serious for once. "Comte d'Estaing, it seems, is a friend of Dr. Franklin's. There may be serious and far-reaching consequences to this affair, and he would like to see it stopped, if possible."

"His principal, perhaps, wishes to apologize?"

The two look at each other.

"Not exactly," says Paul Jones, dubiously.

"Not St. Montaire," says Caron, unwillingly. "The man has the vanity of a peacock — and about as much sense!"

"Do you imply, then, that *I* should offer an apology?" I demand, haughtily.

"Good Lord, no!" cries the Commodore, in English. "I'd thrash you myself, first!" He hesitates, and his heat seems to fade. "But after all — you heard what Dr. Franklin said about duelling, a little while ago . . . isn't there some way this matter might be adjusted between you two, without apologies? Perhaps if you both retract, in a way, what —"

"Impossible!" I snap. "You are not entirely familiar with the circumstances. "We must fight!"

"It's these damned women!" exclaims Paul Jones, fretfully. "A pair of eyes is enough to make

a man turn the world upside down — and make a fool of himself in the bargain!"

"If it's only a woman, Temple," says Caron, trying, like the Commodore, to do his duty in dissuading me — (although it is plain that a *volte-face* on my part would be the last thing either of these two fire-eaters would like to see) — "perhaps it's worth swallowing a bit of your pride. Never trust a woman, *mon ami.* They're the most cheerful liars in the world . . . they lie to their husbands, they lie to their lovers — and, most of all, they lie to themselves!"

"It's not altogether a woman," I tell them, stiffly. "*Monsieur le Marquis* threw in my face an affront which can be only wiped out in blood!" I regard the vista of distant Paris, with burning eyes, and pale lips. "An affront, *mes amis,* which is all the more deadly because it happens to be true!"

The two exchange worried glances.

"What did he say?" asks Paul Jones, bluntly.

I hesitate, then throw reserve to the winds; the Comte d'Estaing can tell them, if I do not, and, besides, they are friends of Grandfather, and they know. . . .

"He called me — " I enunciate, plainly, almost passionately, "— a bastard. A Franklin bastard." I look from one to another with lifted chin. "It happens to be — true."

They are silent a moment, embarrassed.

"You are right, Temple," says the Commodore, after a bit. "The impudent scoundrel deserves to

die, and you must kill him, be he a noble a thousand times!" Fury flames in his ice-blue eyes, he is a proud man, is Paul Jones, as all the world knows, and supersensitive. It is easy for him to imagine my humiliation, and to resent it. "If — anything — happens, my boy — I'll pay up your debt for you. And your Grandfather's!"

"You mustn't do anything rash, whatever happens," I tell him. "This isn't your quarrel."

"Whatever affects the Franklin honour, affects mine," says Paul Jones, simply. "I would be a poor foster-son to your grandfather, my boy, if it did not."

"*Bon sang de la vie!* . . . You are right that you must fight," puts in Caron. "And I am glad — I should have despised you otherwise." He hesitates. "But, the duel aside, Temple . . . you must not take this — affront — too seriously. In France, the bar sinister — if you will forgive my bluntness — means little, if anything. Why, half the great nobles of the kingdom owe their titles to the fact that one of their ancestresses was too intimate with a king!" He grins. "Take the descendants of Gabrielle d'Estrées, La Montespan, La Vallière, and the rest . . . legitimatized, it is true — but the same thing. It is ridiculous to have any feelings in the matter!"

I am silent, and Paul Jones watches me covertly with troubled eyes. In that moment it seems to me that the expression on his face is very akin to that I sometimes see on Grandfather's, when he has

occasion to fret about me, and murmur his inevitable *'Ça ira!'* . . .

We fall to discussing the details of my coming meeting with Monsieur le Marquis de St. Montaire.

4. It is night again, and I am writing letters.

All is arranged. We are to meet at a secluded spot in the Bois, in the morning, shortly after dawn. Paul says that the Marquis at first insisted on the meeting taking place in the courtyard of the Palais, where most duels of the town are fought, but both his friends, as well as mine, vetoed the suggestion at once; the less publicity this affair receives, the better, said they.

It is hard to describe my state of mind. I have written a long letter of explanation, and other things, to Grandfather Franklin; a shorter letter to my father, William Franklin; and the longest — and hardest letter of all to write — to Blanchette, which I enclose in another envelope addressed to Le Veillard, who will deliver it, I know — in case of necessity.

In case of necessity!

Will I be among the living, at this time tomorrow night? I wonder, and it is a wonder not unmixed with apprehension, for no man likes to die. I am not afraid of death — I have never feared the thought of death; but it is good to live, and of a sudden it comes on me how very little we humans appreciate the boon of life. How lightly we value

the privilege of existing in a world which, despite its hardships and disappointments, is a world of beauty, and, not such a bad world, after all. Life is hard, true, and life is cruel at times, and disillusioning; but there are the high spots of beauty — the high moments of joy — which repay for all the disadvantages, of living.

To quit forever this world of quarrelling and loving — of cheating and sentimentalizing and playing the game! Never again to thrill to the wonder of a setting sun, of the magic of a rising moon — to sit on a mountain-top and look at the far sea — to enjoy the blind loyalties of friends, and the cordial hatreds of enemies!

Will I be among the living, at this time tomorrow night? I, who am so young and avid of life — who am tasting the fruit of life with new-grown teeth? Or will I be latest recruit to that unnumbered army of the dead? A vision comes to me of the countless millions of humans, sleeping in the ground . . . some in stately marble cities of the dead, others in the lost far corners of the earth, unmonumented and unsung. Under pyramids they lie, and in catacombs and cathedrals; under the beds of rivers and on the floors of seas. An endless host there is, fruit of the forty thousand years of human life. Once they fought and loved and died — and some few of them sang deathless songs or created deathless beauty or bequeathed deathless fame. But all are gone, now, and they lie on their backs, in the earth from which they sprang, and mutely

stare upward in search of a sun, with sightless eyes.

Am I to die — I, who have done so little, but who have hoped, in the vanity of my youth, to do so much? Will I even receive an epitaph? I think of Grandfather's, which he wrote for himself in '28:

"The Body Of
B. Franklin, Printer,
(Like the Cover of an old Book
Its Contents torn out
And stript of its Lettering & Gilding)
Lies here, Food for Worms.
But the Work shall not be lost;
For it will, (as he believ'd) appear once more,
In a new and more elegant Edition
Revised and corrected
By the Author."

I smile, grimly. There cannot be even said that, of me, for I am like a new book, not an old — and I am not so certain, as is Grandfather, that there ever well be a "new and more elegant edition." Nor, think I privately, is Grandfather! Reflecting on him, and upon this subject, I remember one of his *Poor Richard* epigrams:

"If you would not be forgotten,
As soon as you are dead and rotten,
Either write things worth reading,
Or do things worth the writing."

Again I smile, somewhat wryly. I have neither written things worth reading, nor done things worth the writing. I am a nobody, the mere biological appendage of a somebody . . . and the greater his proportions shall grow to be in the light of history, the more shall mine own diminish; for that is the fate of the seed of celebrity.

A depression comes on me, a black despair; I see myself in perspective, and shudder at my insignificance. Tomorrow, perhaps, I may be dead, yet life will go on, nevertheless. Grandfather will grieve, but not as deeply as he might have, when younger, for he knows that his own span is nearing an end, and soon nothing more will matter. Blanchette will grieve; I think of Blanchette, and I am suddenly sick with cowardice — panicky at thought of never seeing her again. Of never hearing the husky timbre of her voice, of never seeing the mocking smile and the wistful eyes, of never again touching the dear person of her. . . .

My letters are done, and I cannot bear to stay in the stillness of the house. Sleep is out of the question; I must get out into the air, which, perhaps, my lungs shall not know for long. Quietly I arrange my private papers, destroy some and address others. Quietly I leave my room, and passing down the hall, come to Grandfather's chamber. The door is shut, but it is very still, and I can hear his even, almost stertorous breathing.

I stand there before his door for a long moment, leaning my forehead against the polished

panel. My hand is upon the knob, but I dare not turn it to take a last look at him, for fear he might waken, as he is a light sleeper. I can visualize him in his great bed, however — wearing his capacious night-shift, and the night-cap on his head. A great tenderness toward him, a fierce pride in him, grips my heart. I think of our little quarrels in the past; of his goodness to me — of his efforts to make me forget the bar sinister in my parentage. The very bar sinister, which, thrown into my face, will perhaps translate me on the morrow into the Beyond.

I stand there, trembling a little, and wet-eyed.

" Good-bye, Grandfather — " I whisper to the wooden panel. " Just in case . . ." His loud breathing stops, momentarily, and his bed creaks as he turns in his sleep. I stiffen, then relax. And touch my lips to the panel. " *Au revoir,* Grandfather . . ."

Silently, then, I slip out of the house.

5. It is very quiet, and gloomy, down in the boat-basin on the Caillot estate. There is no moon, but the stars glisten like bits of glass in the dark, on the black velvet of the pool. From where I stand, I can see the house on the hill, and I see the twinkle of a light; casually, I wonder why there should be a light — why anyone should be awake at this hour of the night. Could it be that Blanchette is awake? That she is unaccountably troubled, and cannot sleep? When people love greatly, there is said to be a communion between their souls, no matter how far apart they chance to be. I do not know whether

or not this be true, but I like to think it so. It is, somehow, faintly comforting.

I wish I dared go nearer the house, to ascertain if the light is really from her window, but I know such a course would be unwise; also, I have not long to stay. I must saddle my horse, lead him off the grounds, and meet Paul Jones near the bridge, in less than an hour. Caron de Beaumarchais and a discreet doctor friend of his will join us at the rendezvous, at the waterfall in the Bois.

So I sit in the summer-house, alone in the darkness with my memories. And I re-live every step of my romance with Blanchette, from the moment she came into my arms in the sedan chair, until I kissed her last in the loggia *chez Boulainvilliers,* on the night of the betrothal of Mademoiselle de Passy to the Marquis de Tonnerre. I re-live every ecstatic sensation of that last kiss — that kiss she said was to be a "good-bye kiss." Thinking on her remark, I shiver a little, despite the warm July night; it seems, in retrospect, so prophetic . . . only my journey will take me much farther than London!

I sit there, then, with the ghost of her, and I tell her again how I love her, and how I shall always love her, whether there be a life after death or not. For love such as ours is imperishable, and cannot die.

The memory of that other night of solitary farewell on the Stair of a Hundred Steps comes to me; that night I sat in the rain, in my misery, watching Cunégonde's window. And I see, as I have never

seen before, the difference between true love and infatuation — between real and pseudo-love. And it comes on me with a sudden rush how tragic and peculiarly futile it is to make this discovery, when on the verge, perhaps, of severing all connection with life.

So I sit there, a disenchanted lover, but a lover, nevertheless, knowing that soon will come the dawn. And Blanchette is with me, as always.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

Regarding Crossed Swords At Sunrise And The Lady Who Told

DAWN is breaking in a symphony of magnificent colours, shafts of the rising sun crashing chords of sheer beauty against the heaven and the earth.

It is warm, luxuriant July early-morning. The trees of the Bois are masses of dark green, still a little ghostly in the thinning mist. The sound of the waterfall nearby is fresh and musically rhythmic. A bird warbles, somewhat sleepily, in the near obscurity of the forest; soon, having cleared its throat, and tasted the rich tonic of the air, it will burst into song.

It is good to be here watching the splendid pageantry of the dawn, to be listening to the naïve reminiscences of the waterfall and the candid practice of the feathered songster. It is good to breathe in the amorous richness of the living, luxuriant earth — good to smell the sweet, warm breath of the outdoors.

It is definitely good to be alive.

2. Caron de Beaumarchais is here, and Paul Jones, and with the playright is Dr. Purgon. I am rather surprised to find Purgon here, for he is a Passy physician, and among his clients are the Brillons and the Caillots, not to mention Grandfather, of an occasion.

He is a most elegant gentleman, this Dr. Purgon, dressed in black silk lined with ermine, and as powdered and scented as any gentleman or magistrate. He is a Provençal, with a strong Southern accent, wears fine lace at his wrists, and has delicate white hands. He is of the old school of family physicians, is Dr. Purgon, for he is witty, tactful, and well informed as to the gossip of the theatres and the salons. He is very popular with the ladies, who nowadays seem to have put all the trust and confidence which their grandmothers gave to their father confessors, in their doctors, instead. (This change in feminine fancy may be due to the fact that now the welfare of the body is considered primarily, whereas formerly the welfare of the soul came first!)

He is most popular in Passy, our Dr. Purgon, whether for a mild case of the "vapours," or for real maladies. When summoned by a lady patient for the sake of a whim — which is usually the case — he listens with close attention to the long account of her symptoms, but does not take her seriously enough to instil her with alarm, nor yet does he describe her symptoms as being purely imaginative, thereby wounding her esteem. Instead, he prescribes a harmless remedy for the nerves, imparts, perhaps, a bit of equally harmless gossip, and takes a graceful departure.

He first came to our house on the recommendation of Madame Brillon, when I was ill with *la grippe* — an infectious cold or catarrh which causes fever, bad headaches, and nausea, and sends one to bed. (Al-

most annually, usually about the middle of November, when the atmosphere is unpleasantly damp, cold and foggy, there is a small epidemic of this disease in Paris, of which many often die. The Parisian calls it *la coquette,* or *la grippe,* because it grips or seizes so many victims.)

For once, however, Dr. Purgon is not smiling, but is very professional and preoccupied, as if he well realizes the gravity of the occasion. He has a case of instruments for blood-letting, with him, as well as bandages and lotions. It occurs to me that the former are entirely unnecessary, since there may be blood-letting enough without his participation, but I do not say so. He greets me funereally, comments on the spectacle of the sunrise as if it were an outrage against all decency and morality, and inquires solicitously after Dr. Franklin's health. I answer abstractedly, for we are there before the Marquis and his party, who are late.

5. A coach rolls into sight from the direction of Paris, draws up nearby with a great clatter and to-do, and Comte d'Estaing alights, followed by St. Montaire, the Chevalier de Cresmonil, and a gentleman in ecclesiastical garb who yet looks very worldly, and who is introduced as the Abbé Cheverny. He is one of the many abbots *in commendam* who loaf about Paris — a younger son of a great family, who has been put into the Church, as a sort of secular ecclesiastic who has been substituted for a regular abbot, in order to enjoy the revenues and privileges

attached to an abbey. These are not ordained priests, but only received a tonsure at the age of seven; in France abbeys are frequently conferred *in commendam* upon babes in arms — albeit babes of noble blood.

L'Abbé Cheverney is typical of these worldly Commendatory Abbots who over-run the Court and the world of fashion. He is sophisticated, languid, and obviously a sensualist, for his talk is all of women, and that, none too delicate. He is an intimate of many great ladies, and the lover of any number, exalted and otherwise, I gather from a *sotto-voce* description of him by Caron, who evidently attempts to divert me. He is an amusing fellow, though, adds Beaumarchais, and it is a treat to hear him sing that gloriously improper song the Chevalier de Boufflers wrote while at Saint-Sulpice, when he was still an abbé studying for a bishopric — the impious "Tale of the Queen of Golconda."

I listen to Caron politely, and with some interest, but my mind is on the encounter to come. I glance covertly at the Marquis. He is talking to Paul Jones and the Comte d'Estaing, who are examining the rapiers. There is no longer any question of retraction on either side. . . .

I stand there, then, ostensibly oblivious to them all, thinking of the duel to come. I remember the night I killed the street cut-throat who was of the gang which held up the sedan chair, with myself and Blanchette in it. I remember how easily my blade passed through his body . . . just like a sack

of meal, it was! I shiver, despite myself, and little beads of perspiration stand out on my forehead. I am not afraid to die, but it is horrible to think of a steel blade being passed through this thing of flesh-and-blood which is my body. I have a vivid imagination, unfortunately. . . .

Somehow, I seem to take it for granted that I will be the victim, not the Marquis. It is a curious conviction to have, but the confidence on St. Montaire's face — the insolent jauntiness of his bearing — is not without its effect on me. I realize that I must get myself out of this dangerous mood of despair. I think of Blanchette — steadily, passionlessly — hanging on to the thought of her as a drowning man hangs on to a floating spar. . . .

There are voices, formalities. Grave, unsmiling faces, and the courteous rigmarole prescribed by custom. I, too, am unsmiling, and I am glad that, however disturbed I may feel inwardly, I am cool and impassive without. I see admiration in the Commodore's gaze, and receive courage from his covert wink, which, somehow, robs the moment of its import; his look and his wink are as new armour to my spirit.

Monsieur le Comte d'Estaing is referee.

4. *"En garde . . . !"*

The sun is well up . . .

We are facing each other, coatless and waistcoatless, without stocks and with rolled sleeves. We salute each other with the hilts of our swords, as

the little group of witnesses stand back, looking on in utmost silence.

For an instant we eye each other, St. Montaire and myself, and I conceive a sudden violent hatred for that sneering face, with its cold, vindictive grey eyes, the cruel, sensual mouth and the arrogant, beaked nose. He has the well-muscled forearm and wrist of a habitual fencer and, despite his almost imperceptible limp, sturdy legs and light, as soon I am to find out. And he has years of actual duelling experience behind him — duelling with deadly points, not buttoned foils.

Our rapiers click together for the first time, and at the impact of steel on steel, a sudden thrill goes through me, almost as if I had laid hands on the body of the man, and were about to test the strength of him. The next moment I realize that he is strong, indeed, and skilful as well, but it matters little, for with the contact of our rapiers new life flows into me. I realize for the first time that I am armed, as well as he; that I have been well trained by the best master in London, and have practised much; that my wrist, too, is good, and younger than his. That I have a better wind, doubtless, and a fleeter foot.

We fall into a furious exchange of lunges and defensive passes, then simultaneously, almost mutually retire to the defensive. I have a new respect for him, for his point has passed through my guard and ripped an inch-long slit in my sleeve. He is fast, is St. Montaire, and has a clever repertoire of thrusts.

He does not remain on the defensive for long,

however, for he evidently thinks he has gauged my calibre, and has nothing to fear. He comes in, his blade a flash of fire in the sunlight, and I have all I can do to maintain my guard. But I do, and he is unable to pierce it; soon realizing this, he changes his tactics, and begins to fight less furiously, and more deliberately.

The Marquis fences with arm straight out from the shoulder, in French fashion. This gives him a deeper guard and a longer reach, but it is tiring on the arm muscles, as well as the wrist. The average Gaul is a brilliant fencer, and true to temperament; he dashes in, trusting to end the engagement in a short, fierce onslaught.

I fence in the English manner, however, with the seat of my elbow resting on my hip, except when I lunge or riposte. It is less tiring, and my passes are surer and more effective. It is a more cautious method, the British — but then the Anglo-Saxon is a deliberate sort, in battle as well as in more prosaic matters. The French are the more volatile, and the more enthusiastic of the two races; their delight is in the pyrotechnics of fighting, not the results. The Briton fights with a cooler head, and plays a waiting game. When he is ready to strike, he strikes, and usually gains the victory. Nevertheless, the French are conceded to be the best fencers.

I have been taught in the English school, but have crossed foils in the Paris academies with so many French friends, that I am familiar with the tricks of both. We fight then, each in our own way — St.

Montaire and I — and circle each other warily; in carte and tierce, lunging and feinting, and deflecting thrusts, ever keeping our guards intact and ever seeking for an opening. Round and round we follow one another, our rapiers clashing and scraping, and flashing like living things in the sunlight. It is a thrilling game, this game of life and death — and there is an exhilaration in the push of steel on steel which mounts to one's head like a draught of potent wine.

I grow more confident and reckless, thrust when I see a gaping opening, thus leaving myself unprotected — and I am almost finished for my pains. Luckily, however, the Marquis slips on the damp grass, and I am enabled to save my skin by a belated back-hand riposte which would do credit to a contortionist. The next moment we are both back *en garde* — the Marquis black with fury at loss of the victory which he had held for a moment in his hand, and myself duly chastened, having learned caution.

In his disappointment, he makes a vicious cut at my blade, much as if we were fighting with broadswords, and I hear the Comte d'Estaing give a low cry of protest. But I do not pay attention, for of a sudden I look full into St. Montaire's eyes, and seeing the hate and purpose there, am brought back to myself; I remember the supreme insult he hurled at me that night at Mère Rataplan's tavern. . . . I think of Blanchette, and her fright of him. There is a mist of red before my eyes, and I am beside myself with cold rage — I must kill this brute!

We are both a little winded, and both a little tired and disgusted that blood has not yet been drawn. I have entirely lost my earlier fear of him, despite my recognition of his superior swordsmanship; I know no other purpose in life at the moment than to kill him. I see nothing else, hear nothing else.

Glaring at each other, and breathing heavily, we come closer . . . of a sudden I bethink myself of an old fencing trick — a feint so simple that perhaps even St. Montaire, disdaining it, will not quite recognize it in time.

With our rapiers sliding against each other near their points, I suddenly smartly tap my blade twice, against his own, as if I would beat it aside, and lunge for his heart. Instead, just after the second tap I make a lightning-like movement, and thrust under his blade, in the opposite direction, for his right breast — which lunge should be all the more effective as he attempts to cover his heart. The feint is successful, and as he automatically averts his rapier to guard the vital spot, I lunge forward with all my strength, as I had planned . . .

In that instant, however, I see him look away from me toward the nearby road, just back of me, and his eyes widen in surprise at something he sees, so that I take him unawares. I realize this all in that lightning-like instant, and because some Anglo-Saxon instinct of sportsmanship in me tells me to do so, I drop my rapier, rather than pierce his breast when his attention has been diverted. As it is, however, the point of my sword rips his shirt and

scratches the skin beneath, even as it drops to the ground. The next moment, the startled St. Montaire lunges forward in his turn, and as I am now weaponless, runs through the fleshy part of my upper left arm, so that almost immediately my sleeve is dripping blood, and I have been forced to a knee.

I stare down at the blood oozing through the fingers of my right hand, as I clasp it to the wounded arm, still resting on my knee. And as I do so, biting my lip for the pain of it, am aware of a sudden commotion — of voices not those of our own party, all of whom, incidentally, are running toward the Marquis and myself. I look up, to see if Dr. Purgon is bringing the bandages, and rather happy that I have not been wounded in the body (much less not having been killed!) when I see Grandfather Franklin.

5. He is pale as a ghost as he hurries across the glade toward us, followed by Le Veillard. His coach is at the roadside, and I realize that it was the sight of his arrival which distracted the attention of my adversary. He is a corpulent man, is Dr. Franklin, and I had not thought he could run so rapidly as he is running now. My gaze is not at once for him, however, but for Louis-Guillaume, my faithless friend. I fix on him a reproachful look, not unmixed with resentment. Being younger and swifter, he reaches me first.

"So this is your way of keeping secrets!" I hurl at him, at once. "Telling Grandfather!"

"It was not I," pants Louis-Guillaume. "'Twas Blanchette!"

Before, astounded, I can say more, Dr. Franklin has joined us. As he sees that I am apparently not badly wounded, he composes himself. A profound silence falls on the group.

"I hope," says Grandfather blandly, breathing heavily from his sprint, "I do not intrude . . ."

"Not at all," murmurs the courteous Chevalier de Cresmonil, but I rise to my feet and face him, with burning cheeks.

"If you want the truth, Grandfather," I tell him, resentfully, "you *do!* If I had wanted you to be here with us this morning, I would have invited you!" My wounded arm is burning like fire, and my temper is none too sweet. "The general public," I continue, heatedly, "was not requested to be present. If that had been the case, we would have staged our little spectacle at the Palais Royal!"

"Don't mind Temple!" puts in Paul Jones, hastily, to Grandfather. "He doesn't know what he's saying, the lad doesn't!"

"Ah, *you're* here, Commodore," says Grandfather, with affected surprise. "Good morning to you! And I see you, too, Monsieur de Beaumarchais! Dear me! I had thought this hour the middle of the night for *you,* my friend!"

The great sea-fighter and the famous playwright look at each other sheepishly, much like two naughty little boys who have been caught in some mischief. No one seems to have anything to say, and Dr. Pur-

gon takes this opportunity to advance to dress my wound.

"Good morning, your excellency!"

"Ah, Purgon! — good morning, indeed!" Grandfather turns on me a bland face. "Did you say the general public was not invited, Temple? Then why do I see all my friends here? . . . good morning, *Monsieur le Comte.*"

D'Estaing bows gravely.

"We are honoured to have you with us, your excellency. I have no doubt that *monsieur votre petit-fils* neglected to tell you of our little meeting because it was so early in the morning, and he did not wish to disturb your rest."

"Very thoughtful of *monsieur* my grandson, indeed," says Grandfather, dryly. He glances at the taciturn St. Montaire who is standing with folded arms. "I trust my grandson did not injure you, *Monsieur le Marquis?*"

The Marquis flushes, despite himself, and I see the Abbé Cheverny hide a smile.

"He did not!" acidly. "This is an affair of honour, Dr. Franklin; I presume that young Monsieur Franklin is old enough to think and act for himself. As far as I am concerned, my quarrel is with himself alone."

I am about to agree, hotly, when Grandfather silences me with a gesture.

"You are altogether right, Marquis," mildly. "His affairs are his own. As it happens, however, he is my confidential secretary as well as my grand-

son, and I had thought to put his surplus energies to other uses, today . . . would it be impertinent to inquire if you are altogether — finished?"

"My honour is quite satisfied," returns the Marquis, with a meaning glance at my wounded arm. "Perhaps young Monsieur Franklin will think twice before he insults me again!"

I push past the doctor, facing him.

"But *I* am not satisfied, *Monsieur!*" I fling at him. "As far as I am concerned, the fight has only begun! Take up your sword, sir!"

Both the Comte d'Estaing and Caron interfere.

"Absurd!" says Beaumarchais. "You are wounded, and cannot fight again today. Besides, you had the Marquis at your mercy when you dropped your rapier — I saw it all . . . you should be as satisfied as he — even more so!"

"That is true," says the Comte. "I saw you spare St. Montaire, when his attention was diverted by the arrival of his excellency's coach. You are quits."

Both the Marquis and I protest, at this, but our friends over-rule us, and it is some satisfaction to me to realize that St. Montaire would much rather I had run him through, than put him under an obligation to me, for sparing his life. There is an attempt made to get us to patch up our quarrel, and shake hands, but both of us simultaneously turn our backs and walk away, so that the two parties separate, after paying each other — and Dr. Franklin — effusive compliments.

"Now that everybody's honour is satisfied," observes Grandfather, dryly, "I think it high time to think of satisfying our stomachs. You gentlemen will please accompany me back to Passy, and breakfast with us."

Caron and Paul Jones both protest, anticipating a wigging, but Grandfather will have none of it.

"Temple is leaving for Havre, to cross to England to visit his father, this afternoon," says he. "We'll give him a farewell banquet." They accept, then, and as Dr. Purgon, having finished dressing my arm, begins to pack his instruments, Dr. Franklin rallies my two seconds. "So this is why you two rogues were so interested in drawing me out on the subject of duelling, yesterday, was it?"

The three fall into animated converse, and Louis-Guillaume, looking very hang-doggish, comes over to me.

"How much does he know?" I demand, quickly, in a low voice.

"Very little," says he. "When I saw Blanchette yesterday, she drew me out about your quarrel with St. Montaire, and the duel, but I made her promise, first, not to tell anyone — Dr. Franklin, least of all. Late last night — this morning, in fact — she sent her maid to fetch me; she had been sitting up, sleepless, all night." I think of the light I saw in her window, and nod. "I hurried to her, and she talked me into waking your grandfather and having him come here this morning, and try to stop the duel. I only agreed after she threatened to do it herself,

and perhaps cause a scandal by doing so. In fact, I knew that if she did this mad thing, it would be impossible to have kept secret the truth of her presence in the tavern, and the rest of it. So I broke my word to you, and awakened him. He dressed immediately, ordered the coach, and told the coachman to drive like the very devil. He did."

"Did he question you, then?"

"He merely asked me if I knew what had brought about the duel — if it were over a woman. I said it was, and, thinking to shield Blanchette further, told your grandfather that I thought the Marquis had discovered that you had once attempted to abduct his mistress, the singer, Yolanda, in a sedan chair. Dr. Franklin knows about that adventure, and my explanation sounded convincing."

Before I could comment upon this, Grandfather turns toward us.

"Louis-Guillaume, will you be good enough to ride Temple's horse back home, and stay to breakfast, and let him return with me in the coach?"

Le Veillard consents, gladly, and soon he and Caron and the Commodore are mounting their horses, while Dr. Purgon, taking leave of us, departs in his own carriage. The Marquis's coach is already disappearing down the road. There is nothing for me to do but acquiesce, and I follow Dr. Franklin, and climb into the coach. We are off, heading for Passy, with our three friends cantering ahead.

6. Once settled in the privacy of the coach, Grandfather's bland good-humour slips from his face like a mask, and I see that he is very tired and harassed-looking. He gives me a long look — a peculiar look, as if he sees me for the first time, yet cannot make me out.

"Now that your little escapade is over," says he, quietly, "suppose you tell me what it's all about?" I look at him in my turn, and see that he is very angry, although, as always, he gives few outward signs; Dr. Franklin never loses his temper; which makes his anger, when he is really angered, all the more to be feared. This once, however, I am too emotionally upset to care.

"There is nothing to tell," I answer, somewhat shortly. I am still very resentful of his having come up so dramatically at the moment he did; his doing so made me feel so young in the others' eyes! "If I must remind you, Grandfather — only a few minutes ago you admitted that my affairs were my very own!"

"That is true," says he. "But when your affairs reach the point where they affect the good name of my country, they are my affairs as well!" I am silent. He goes on, rather bitterly. "I knew you were young and thoughtless, and was ever ready to make allowances for that thoughtlessness of youth — but I never dreamed that you would so jeopardize my reputation and official position over some woman!"

"It was not exactly over a woman!" I snap, stung.

"If it were only that, I should have thought twice before fighting!"

"What was this so-important insult exchanged between you two, then, which made you so lightly risk bringing scandal down on your name and mine?" he demands, sarcastically.

"The same thing which really caused the Brillons to turn me down when I wanted to marry Cunégonde!" I flare, sick with humiliation.

"And what was that?" he asks, in a different tone, with lifted brows.

I throw all caution to the winds, in the depth of my hurt pride, as memory rushes back.

"You ask for it, and I will tell you," I continue, deliberately. "The Marquis de St. Montaire called me — a Franklin — bastard . . ." I pause, looking out of the coach-window, unseeingly. "If you hadn't come up when you did, he might have finished me properly — and I would have been glad!"

Grandfather Franklin hears me out, and does not answer a word. Instead, he sits there, immobile and silent, and when I steal a look at him at last, I see that his face is granite-like, but very, very old. Newly old. And in his steady gaze, fixed on nothingness, are ghosts.

We do not exchange another word until we rumble into the flagged courtyard of the Hôtel de Valentinois. And by then, my anger and irritation have faded, leaving me only infinitely sorry for having said the cruel thing I have said. I would give my right arm to be able to retract it — would give ten years

of my life for the courage to take his hand in mine and ask his forgiveness. But like all Anglo-Saxons, I have a horror of sentimentality between men — a positive dread of exhibiting emotion. So the moment passes, and the opportunity is lost, and we are home again.

7. We have had a talk, after luncheon, Grandfather and I, and I realize that it is wiser that I go to England as he wishes me to, despite my wanting to remain because of Blanchette. He has made no further reference to the duel, nor to our conversation in the coach as we returned home, but is as cordial as ever, and solicitous for my comfort and welfare on the trip ahead. I realize that it is best I go, now — best that we separate for a while, Grandfather and I, considering the state of mind we both are in. We tacitly agree that the sooner I leave, the better, as my wounded arm will then cause no comment.

I am to leave Paris by diligence, this evening, on the first stage of my trip, and already the servants are packing my boxes. As soon as I can do so, I unobtrusively slip out of the house, and walk over to the Caillots. I must see Blanchette. . . .

As I mount the steps to the terrace of the Caillot house, it seems to me that I can glimpse Blanchette walking with little Sabine in the garden, just below. I pause, and look over the balustrade, and see that I am right. The little girl is running down a garden path, playing merrily with her little dog, and Blan-

chette follows after, lost, apparently, in deep thought.

Remembering her warning, I resolve to be conventional today, and pay a formal call. Her husband can hardly find fault with my calling to say farewell, as any neighbour might, on leaving on such a long trip! I knock at the front door, am admitted, and a servant asks me to wait in the same little blue-and-gold morning room which has such exquisite memories for me, while he goes to notify Madame in the garden of my arrival.

He is gone an unconscionably long time, while I wait, on edge with longing to see her, and already tasting in anticipation the sadness of saying goodbye. Just as I wonder what has become of her, the servant reappears, alone, and obviously ill at ease.

"I am sorry, Monsieur Franklin," says he, very apologetically. "But Madame is not at home."

"Not at home?" I cry, in amazement. "Why — I saw her in the garden, myself, as I came up the terrace!"

"I am very sorry," he repeats, doggedly, "but I have been in the garden. You must have been mistaken, Monsieur — for Madame is not at home!"

Of a sudden the truth dawns on me, and I flush hotly. This is her way of punishing me for the tavern — for the duel and the anxiety it gave her — for everything! I am about to tell the waiting lackey, who is curiously eyeing my arm in a sling, that I am leaving for England, and insist on seeing her anyway, when I think better of it.

Thanking him, I stalk out of the house, and down the terrace without a look back into the garden. I am furious at Blanchette for treating me so, and tell myself that I never want to see her again . . . let her find out from others of my departure — perhaps she'll be sorry, then!

And so I return to the Hôtel de Valentinois, in the blackest of moods, to prepare to leave on my long trip to London.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

In Which A Little Girl Dies And A Gentleman Returns Home

IT HAS been a fascinating three months, my three months in England. Interesting in more ways than one, this hectic quarter of a year, but I am glad to be back in France. Glad to be back in the Paris I love, no matter what the season; glad to be back with Grandfather again, in Passy, despite our occasional differences in opinion.

William Franklin, my father, was more than kind to me, and unaffectedly happy to have me with him. He lives in London quietly on the pension of eight hundred pounds a year the British Government has given him, and has changed much since I had seen him last. This was several years ago, immediately after the peace preliminaries were signed, and following a violent quarrel between Grandfather and myself. Before the preliminaries were signed, I sent a plea to Shelbourne to do something for my father, without Grandfather's consent; I regretted this, later, for as Dr. Franklin pointed out rather bitterly, I was asking the British Government to give Father a good post at the very time when Grandfather was trying to prevent a clause in the treaty conceding anything to the Tories. Father, of course, was one of the most widely-known Tories in America, and Grandfather's fury at my plea to Lord Shelbourne, through B. Vaughn, knew no bounds. Then it was that I stormed off to London, to visit Father, and did not

write to Grandfather for many months. But I regretted it, when I had had time to think it over, for I was a Patriot, after all, and despite my ingrained feeling that Grandfather had stolen my father from me, I loved Grandfather, and was more attached to him than to any man living.

This trip to England, however, was altogether different, since it was made at Dr. Franklin's own wish. I met many of his excellency's old friends there, and was widely entertained and made much of, as the grandson of the most famous American; it is odd, indeed, how popular Grandfather still is, in England, after having been such a bitter enemy of King George, and having won the war.

While I was in London, Polly Hewson — with whose family Grandfather used to live in London, years ago, and ever one of Grandfather's favourites — went to Passy to visit Dr. Franklin with her children, and stay the better part of the winter. With my cousin Benny Bache still in school, and myself in England, it was quite lonely for Grandfather at the Legation, and I was glad of Polly's coming. And, not having Grandfather on my conscience, enjoyed my stay in London all the more.

It is a most fascinating city, London town. A man's town it is, and despite my love of the gaieties and sophistication of Paris, I feel more at home in London than anywhere else. Perhaps it is because I am English — for are not we Americans English, despite our different name? — and like all British

colonials, or former colonials, London, somehow, is home.

And it is not without its life and colour, London Town. The great houses of the nobility offer entertainment on a grand scale, and my days and nights are one ball and rout and supper-party after another. Mornings I ride in Rotten Row, and afternoons lunch at one of the famous literary clubs or taverns. There is the theatre, of course, and the gaiety of Vauxhall. And visits in the country, at some of the most beautiful houses in old England. I can go on for pages describing in detail my interesting stay in London, but that is not my tale. No, my duty — and my inclination — takes me back to Paris, for there, after all, is Grandfather and my usual routine of life. And there, is Blanchette Caillot.

2. Blanchette. For three months I have lived without a sight of Blanchette — without hearing her voice, or touching the soft hand of her. For three months I have conversed with strangers, and jested with strangers, and even made love to strangers, but all the time the thought of Blanchette has been with me; waking or sleeping, she has ever been either in the forefront or the background of my mind. . . . I have talked politics and literature and music, family gossip and philosophy, and all the while the dim thought of her has been patiently waiting in my consciousness — waiting for the moment when I am alone, and all my thought is for her.

For three months I have hungered and thirsted for Blanchette. Countless letters have I written, and as many destroyed; for I know that my love for Blanchette is hopeless, and hopeless must ever be. My head tells me that, with cruel clarity, even while there is crueler famine in my heart. I have tried to cast out the thought of her from my mind, pluck from my breast the memories that have enmeshed themselves around my heart-strings. But it is useless. She has grown into my tissues, become a part of my soul; she is the goddess-hood within me, my other, finer self. And I cannot rid myself of her . . . nor do I want to!

Love is a yearning hunger, and I am starving for Blanchette. Love is a bitter thirst, and my heart and soul are parched. I hold out as long as I can, as a starving, thirsty pilgrim, lost in the desert wilderness, staggers on to the last ounce of his physical and spiritual strength. And at last I, too, succumb, hopelessly lost in the wilderness of my desire. And return to Paris, and Blanchette . . . a chastened pilgrim, worn and wan with the knowledge that love is suffering.

3. It is a dull November day when I arrive at Passy, and alight in the great courtyard of the Hôtel de Valentinois. Grandfather, who has been advised of my coming by courier, had sent the coach to Paris to meet the diligence, and is now awaiting me in his study.

He has not changed an iota, it seems to me, as we

shake hands, but he, eyeing me keenly in his turn, tells me that I have.

"You look very fit," says he, judicially. "The change of climate did you good; you were getting soft in Paris, when you left. But nevertheless, you've changed, somehow."

"How is that?" I ask, somewhat indifferently.

"You've matured a bit more," continues Grandfather. "It is odd what a short period of change of scene will do!"

"Nonsense, sir!" wearily.

"You're older," says Grandfather. "More reserved, more subdued. . . . I'm glad to see you're settling down, Temple. I'll confess you had me a little worried before you left."

I smile an uncomfortable smile, and ask for our friends. He tells me of them all, scantily but interestingly, as they come to his mind. He has dined with Madame Helvétius and the Abbés Morellêt and Niccolé last night. Turgot has the gout again. But so has Grandfather been suffering from the gout, and gall-stones in addition; Polly Hewson has been playing nurse to him, he adds whimsically, half the time she has been here. He has seen much of the Brillons. Cunégonde has married her Monsieur Paris, and is now Madame Paris. . . . Grandfather gives me a curious look as he retails this bit of news, and seems relieved that I comment on this intelligence with sincere casualness.

"Monsieur Brillon wants to see you," says he. "He wishes to offer you a post in his business."

"To make up to me for refusing me as a son-in-law?" I demand, with something of a sneer. "No, thank you!"

It is not that at all, protests Grandfather. The Brillons are genuinely fond of me, and Brillon himself broached the subject of offering to take me into his business when I returned. It might not be a bad experience for me, says Grandfather, even if I do not go on with it.

"What about my work in the Legation?" I ask.

Grandfather looks down.

"The Congress has sent me a new *chargé-d'affaires,*" says he, grimly. "A Colonel Humphreys, who cannot even speak French."

"But what about your request that *I* be appointed Secretary of the Legation?" startled.

"They did not even take the trouble to answer it," admits Dr. Franklin, quietly.

"There's gratitude for you!" I exclaim, hotly. "'Put not your trust in princes,' indeed! 'Put not your trust in republics!' *I* should say! . . . after all you've done for America!"

"Sometimes it is very discouraging," says Grandfather, and he looks old and worn. "I often think I have accomplished nothing here, after all. And my countrymen agree with me, according to letters I get from home by every post. They accuse me of having speculated with my nephew, Jonathan Williams, on supplies; of having helped France make outrageous demands for the reimbursement of her merchants who have been brought near ruin because

of the depreciation of our money; of being pro-French in all my diplomatic dealings. Why, they even accuse me of having been ready to sacrifice the Newfoundland fisheries!"

"But that is infamous!" I exclaim, springing up. "It's just like Jay, Lee and Adams to scatter such lies about you —"

"It was not they," says Dr. Franklin. "In fact, I had to appeal to Jay and Adams to testify to the honourable part I played in the peace negotations . . . it was humiliating enough, asking them to do that — but there was nothing else to be done. Our friend, the Reverend Cooper, is dead, and my enemies are in full cry: the Adams's in Massachusetts, Dickinson and his crew, in Pennsylvania —" He stops, abruptly. "But enough of troubles! 'Tis a happy welcome I give you!"

I accept the hint, glad to take his mind off the topic, and ask him of his experiments. His face lights up, as he begins to talk of his investigations; he has been experimenting with a new kind of lamp, at Passy, and has had Viny, in London, manufacture for him a new kind of wheel; he has delved into the subjects of the pirogues of Otahiti, and is perfecting a new type of spectacles with bifocal lenses, as well as a new model of a stove which is being completed in Paris, and has made an original modification of the harmonica which was made for him at Versailles. He has proposed daylight saving time, the principle of which he explains with enthusiasm, and is inspecting plans Le Roy has submitted to him for a new river-

boat named the *Naupotame,* upon which he intends elaborating.

I listen with interest, but soon my attention wanders, and I blurt out the question which has been hanging on my lips these many minutes.

"Have you seen anything of the — Caillots?"

"The Caillots? . . ." His face clouds. "Poor Blanchette! She is beside herself with worry."

"Why?" An icy hand grips my heart.

"Little Sabine is very ill, and the doctors have been bleeding her, repeatedly. But she seems to have gotten worse, instead of better . . . this crazy passion for phlebotomy on the part of the physicians seems to know no limits! Their blood-lettings, according to Tronchin, annually kill four thousand people in Paris, and forty thousand in France, but there seems no way of stopping them, or getting them to realize that bleeding isn't a remedy for every malady under the sun. Both the Faculties of Montpellier, and Paris (between whom there's such rivalry) agree on blood-letting, however. It's a disgrace, just as the Paris hospitals are a disgrace!" goes on Grandfather, indignantly. "Doctors? Bah! There are more old drunkards than old doctors!"

But I am not listening, for my mind is on Blanchette. Poor Blanchette, whose very life is wrapped up in Sabine! — How she must be suffering!

"Don't you think I ought to call on the Caillots, and inquire about the child?" I ask.

"By all means!" says Grandfather, heartily. "They'll appreciate it, especially so soon after

your return. In fact, after we've had our *déjeuner,* I think I'll go over with you."

Neither of us, however, eats much at luncheon. And this is unusual, for Grandfather. I am strangely troubled.

4. Grandfather is for walking over to the Caillots, explaining that he gets too little exercise, as it is, and I acquiesce eagerly. All the way over he talks cheerfully, giving me news of our friends, and I pretend to listen, but in reality I do not take note of a word he says, for my mind is on Blanchette.

How will she receive me? Warmly or coolly? Has she forgiven me yet? Has she resented my not writing? Does she still care for me? Or has Sabine's illness drawn her and her husband together again? Such things often happen. I tell myself that I hope this is what has really taken place, but in my heart of hearts, I know this is a lie. I cannot bear the idea of her becoming reconciled to Caillot, despite the fact that he has every right to her. I am fiercely jealous of him, and sick with misery at the thought of such a possibility . . . how love can corrupt the character of a man!

As we arrive at the Caillots', however, and find a number of carriages in the courtyard — among which I recognize that of Dr. Purgon — and note, as we are admitted, the air of tension which seems to reign throughout the house, I realize the selfishness of my thoughts, and am heartily ashamed. The low whisperings of the servants, the echo of muffled

footsteps, bring home to me the fact that little Sabine is dangerously ill, and my heart goes out to the child. She is like a golden-haired elf, is Sabine, with her thoughtful, piquant features and her unexpected little speeches; an affectionate, adorable little elf, who has climbed on my lap and hugged and kissed me ecstatically when I brought her a sweet. When I think of that sweet-tempered Sabine I have known —doubly exquisite with the charm of childhood and the eyes she has inherited from her mother — lying ill, and being drained of her precious blood by these obsessed gentlemen of the lancet, a lump comes up in my throat.

At sight of Dr. Franklin, a servant tells us that all visitors have been denied, but that he is an exception, and that Monsieur Caillot has ordered that he be brought upstairs, if he came. Slowly Grandfather mounts the stairs behind the servant, and I follow, my nerves tingling with the anticipation of meeting Blanchette again.

Hardly do we reach the top when a wild shriek rings out through the house — a cry of agony and helpless anguish that stabs the heart like a knife stroke.

There are excited voices, subdued cries, and the like, as we hurry after the servant, suddenly galvanized into activity. Following him, we burst into what is apparently Madame Caillot's own boudoir.

There are a number of people in here, all excited and ill at ease, but my eyes are only for Blanchette. She is just being led out of the doorway of her bed-

room into the boudoir, in a half-fainting condition, by two medical-looking men. She is wan and thin, with black circles under her eyes, as if she has not slept for many nights, and as I catch sight of her, great tears are running down her face . . . they are leading her out of the sick-room, the two men in black, but she is weakly struggling with them, attempting to fight her way back.

I look beyond them, through the door, and understand. I can see the great canopied bed, and lighted candles all about. Dr. Purgon, standing at its head, is just covering the upper portion of a small, slight form with a sheet, while Monsieur Brillon, dishevelled and on his knees, is weeping wildly as he watches. At the foot of the bed a priest kneels, praying over his crucifix. The next moment someone from within shuts the door, as if to shut out the scene of death from Blanchette, and she turns. My heart numbed with shock and sorrow, I call out, despite myself . . .

"Blanchette!"

At the cry, she looks, up, takes me in through eyes heavy with tears, and holds out her hands with a helpless little gesture, as her mouth twists pitifully.

"Temple! . . . Sabine is gone — my baby is gone, Temple!"

There is such tragic pathos in her voice, such infinite bereavement, that the women domestics crowding in the door behind me begin to weep, audibly, and the men to loudly blow their noses. For an instant Blanchette is as if in a trance — shocked to numb-

ness. Only her eyes are eloquent with anguish, like her twisting lips, as she stands there, swaying.

"My baby — my Sabine!" she exclaims, in a choking voice, as her hand goes up to her throat. "My golden baby-girl . . . she's — dead, Temple — *dead!*"

I stand there, helpless and horrified, just as Grandfather, his eyes warm with sympathy, steps toward her, and the others fall back.

"My poor, dear child . . ." says he, in a voice thick with emotion, and holds out his arms.

She sees him, as if for the first time, and with recognition comes realization. With a quick glance behind her, at the closed door, she suddenly bursts into a storm of sobbing, and flies into Grandfather's arms. He gathers her in, laying his old cheek on her hair, and gently pats her, as someone shoves up a chair. He seats himself, taking her into his lap, and she clings to him, crying her heart out upon his shoulder.

"My baby . . . my *ba-a*-by . . ." moans Blanchette, heart-rendingly, and as she does, the women-servants wail with her, and the men turn away, so that they do not have to look at one another.

"My dear child —" says Grandfather, soothingly, again and again. "My dear, *dear* child!"

I stand there, stiff as a ramrod, my eyes heavy with tears. If only I dared go to Blanchette — take her in my arms . . . I am suddenly passionately grateful to Grandfather for being there.

The door of the death-chamber opens, momen-

tarily, as Dr. Purgon emerges, very grave and expressionless, and with him comes the echo of the priest's prayers, and the softer echo of those of a nun, a vignette of whom I glimpse for the first time.

Hardly is the door closed again when every man and woman in the room, and the corridor without, kneels and all begin to pray in low voices, as they make the sign of the cross. Only Grandfather and myself do not kneel, for we are not Catholics, nor does Dr. Purgon, who quietly walks out between the kneeling figures.

The hum of the prayers within, and the more audible accompaniment of those without, is like the soft whisper of a tiny stream meandering through a dark forest on a still night; I stand there, in an embrasure near a window, very straight, and almost ashamed of the fact that I have not the courage to kneel, too — religion or no religion. And Blanchette, sobbing a little more quietly in Grandfather's sympathetic embrace, looks up at the door — turns her face away quickly, as if unable to bear the sight — and sees me in the window-embrasure.

Hardly knowing what I am doing, I half-raise my arms, in both sympathy and tenderness. She beckons to me with a pitiful wave of her hand, and I am at her side in an instant. I take her hand, sinking to a knee as I do so, and look into her grief-ravaged face.

"*Poor* Blanchette . . . !"

A self-torturing little smile twists her lips.

"She loved you, Temple . . . my baby used to ask me — when you were — coming back."

The tears are streaming down my own face, and I am not ashamed of them; I am too moved to answer. Nor does she seem to expect an answer, my poor Blanchette, for she suddenly hides her face on Dr. Franklin's breast, and begins to sob steadily, pitifully, as a little girl sobs.

5. The room has been more or less cleared of people as Monsieur Caillot emerges, looking rather dazed, and red-eyed. I am sorry for him from the bottom of my heart, and silently extend my hand, as does Grandfather. Despite his emotion, he shakes hands with us both, but manages to be pompous even in his grief. As if he expects that Caillot will want to comfort his wife, and she, him, Grandfather half turns Blanchette about, very gently.

Monsieur Caillot blows his nose forcefully, stoops and kisses his wife on the temple, then begins to walk up and down the floor, with his hands behind his back. Ever and anon he comes to a dramatic halt, to stare searchingly at the closed door of the chamber of death, then blows his nose again, and continues his savage walk. Blanchette, her face hidden on Grandfather's shoulder, becomes exhausted from sobbing, but cannot seem to stop. Caillot, on his part, makes no further effort to comfort her, as if his own feelings are enough to absorb his attention; from that moment I begin actually to hate the man, for I know that within a month, if not earlier he will

be attempting to forget his bereavement in some cheap amour, whereas poor Blanchette will never forget.

Grandfather begins to speak, to the two of them, very soothingly and tranquilly.

"It is the will of God and nature that these mortal bodies be laid aside when the soul is to enter into real life. This is rather an embryo state, a preparation for living. A man is not completely born until he is dead. Why then should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals, a new member added to their society?"

Blanchette only moans, and Monsieur Caillot again blows his nose, but nods in melancholy acquiescence.

"We are spirits," goes on Grandfather. "That bodies should be lent us, while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge, or in doing good to our fellow creatures, is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes, and afford us pain instead of pleasure, instead of an aid become an encumbrance, and answer none of the intentions for which they were given, it is equally kind and benevolent that a way is provided by which we may get rid of them. Death is that way. We ourselves, in some cases prudently choose a partial death. A mangled painful limb which cannot be restored, we willingly cut off. He who plucks out a tooth parts with it freely, since the pain goes with it; and he who quits the whole body, parts at once with all pains and possibilities of pains

and diseases which it was liable to, or capable of making him suffer."

Blanchette is still sobbing, heart-brokenly, but Grandfather's carefully monotonous voice seems to calm her somewhat. Monsieur Brillon paces more slowly . . .

"Our dear little friend and we were invited abroad on a party of pleasure, which is to last forever. Her chair was ready first, and she is gone before us. We could not all conveniently start together; and why should you and I be grieved at this, since we are so soon to follow, and know where to find her?"

Neither Blanchette or her husband answer, naturally, but as I take her hand and begin to stroke it, comfortingly, she gives mine a little squeeze. A moment later she sits up, and I see that she has collected herself, and has ceased to weep. She stands, and Grandfather rises in his turn. We all look at her.

"I want to see my baby," says Blanchette, making a gallant effort to contain herself. "I must see her —before . . ." her voice trails off into nothingness, as she starts toward the door.

Her husband makes an irritated effort to stop her, but Dr. Franklin, wiser in the ways of women, holds up a restraining hand.

"Let her go, my friend," says he, quietly. "It is her right." And to Blanchette. "You'll be brave, my dear?"

"I'll be — brave —" she falters.

Blanchette flashes Grandfather a sad ghost of a

smile, then, walking slowly to the closed door, with her eyes fixed on it, as slowly turns the knob, and opens it. We all watch her, like men turned to stone.

The door is open, and she stands on the lintel a moment, and seems to sway. As I involuntarily move forward to catch her, in the event that she swoons, I see her lips form Sabine's name — her face a tragic, tearless mask. At the same moment the nun approaches her at the door, and taking her arm, leads her gently within, toward the great bed with its pathetic little mound in the centre. The priest, rising from his prayers, closes the door, as I get my last glimpse of Blanchette, dropping to her knees beside her precious dead.

6. Monsieur Caillot blows his nose, and again takes up his tragically pompous pacing of the floor, ever and anon wringing his hands.

Grandfather blows his nose, and taking off his spectacles, begins to polish them very carefully; I see that his eyes are heavy with tears, and know that he is thinking of his long-lost baby boy, Frankie.

I blow my nose, in turn, walk to the window, and stare out with unseeing eyes. I am thinking of Blanchette. And of poor little Sabine. . . . I breathe a little prayer for Sabine.

"*My baby used to ask me — when you were coming — back home,*" Blanchette had said, between her sobs.

I smile a twisted, mirthless smile.

I have come back home.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH

Concerning A Question, An Answer And A Wedding Night

MY BROKEN-HEARTED Blanchette has gone away for a long visit with her people at Bélloy, and I am left alone. Grandfather is here, and innumerable friends and acquaintances — all the human contacts which I value most in this world — yet am I alone, for Blanchette is gone. When the person one loves is near one — if only in the same neighbourhood — life is full and rich, and the world a good world, indeed. But when the one one loves is gone away, life is empty and futile, and the world a desolate vacuum of monotony and depression. How little it takes to make one happy, when one is in love, and the loved one close at hand! . . . And how much it takes to arouse our jaded interest and overcome our vague discontent when we are not in love at all — or worse yet, in love, and the loved one temporarily out of our life!

Paris is Paris, however. I go to as many brilliant social functions as ever, attend Grandfather religiously at Court, participate in the affairs of my many club, lodge and intellectual affiliations. There are theatre parties and opera balls, and promenades with friends along the three grand boulevards planted with elms which extend from the Bastille to the Porte St. Honoré; the latter, particularly, on Thursdays, about five o'clock, when there is an unending procession of coaches, chariots and chaises.

Later on in the season, with the coming of Spring, the Bois de Boulogne is the gathering-place of fashion, and the races and reviews at Longchamps the most brilliant spectacle in all the world. From the Place Louis XV to the Bois, the Avenue des Champs Elysées and the immense Avenue de Neuilly are literally packed with four lines of carriages, and not a cab or hackney-coach in sight. The *cachet* of good taste is to have either two or six horses, and these only on Wednesdays and Fridays; carriages drawn by four horses are sneered at, for these betray the lower magistrates and small financiers, who cannot afford six horses, and disdain the use of two.

It is a good place to live in, my Paris, and I love it, as who does not? Only the other day the Marquis Caraccioli, who is the Neapolitan Ambassador to France, was recalled by his monarch to become Viceroy of Sicily. Grandfather says that when he made his official farewell to the King, His Majesty congratulated him on going to live in one of the most delightful places in Europe. But the Ambassador shook his head, mournfully. "The most delightful place in Europe, sire, is the one I am leaving, and that is the Place Vendôme!" And was it not Gresset, in his *Le Méchant,* who said, "In Paris one lives, elsewhere one vegetates!" . . .?

Yes, this is my Paris, and I love it. But life, for me, is a mockery, for Blanchette is gone. And as long as she shall be away, it is only the shell of me which goes through the motions of daily existence. The inner man — the spectator within me — is merely

marking time. I shall not go on living again, in the real sense, until my Blanchette is come back.

2. It is just about the time of the Mesmer investigation that I get word from Le Veillard of Blanchette's early return, and the world rights itself again.

It is not long since Mesmer has arrived from Vienna with his secret of animal magnetism, and set the capital by the ears. The Queen has been said to favour him, and he is quite the fad. Great lords and ladies gather about his magic bucket filled with scrap iron, to cure their ills, fancied or otherwise. Everyone who is anyone has visited him, and it is said that the Government has even thought of buying his secret for hundreds of thousands of francs.

Mesmer has the friendship of the Marquis de La Fayette, and through him has founded a society called the " Lodge of Harmony," to join which one must pay an entry fee of ten thousand francs. He has electrified a tree near his house, so that the *hoi polloi* can benefit from his labours free of charge, and men and women of all classes flock to the magic tree.

It is only recently, however, that the French Government has become suspicious of Mesmerism, and the King has appointed a committee of investigation to examine its processes. The committee was named by the Academy of Sciences, with Bailly and Dr. Franklin heading it. Both Mesmer and Ledru (better known as Comis, King of the Boulevards) who are the two most noted exponents of animal

magnetism, have declined to show their powers for the benefit of the committee, but Deslon, their best-known disciple, has consented.

As gout and gall-stones confine Grandfather to Passy, the committee comes to the Legation, and holds the experiments in the garden of the Hôtel de Valentinois. Doctor Deslon uses the trees, practising on seven people who are ill. The first subject is blindfolded, and being told that some of the trees are electrified, is sent out walking in the garden. At the first tree he touches, he shudders, at the second he foams at the mouth, at the third, gives a death rattle, and at the fourth falls down as if electrocuted. None of these trees, of course, have been electrified.

Grandfather then submits to an experiment himself, of no mean proportions. At the end of the investigation, he writes a report on animal magnetism, and by its end, there is nothing left of it. Indeed, there is one paragraph in particular, written for the Government, only, which has been kept secret, for it exposes the affinity of Mesmerism with Eroticism.

Despite La Fayette's aid, and the fact that he often played the harmonica for us at Passy, Grandfather's *exposé* and Marie Antoinette's hostility destroy Mesmer's vogue, and he leaves Paris post-haste; but takes along with him three hundred and forty thousand livres as the fruit of his visit, which perhaps consoles him for his disgrace!

3. It is early spring, and Louis-Guillaume comes to tell me that the Caillots are returning, to open their

house in Passy again. He has heard from Blanchette, and she has bid him tell " anyone who might be interested," that she will be inspecting her gardens — at midnight of a night a week hence.

Although it is some months since I have seen her, the week that follows is perhaps the longest I have ever spent in my life. I lie awake for hours, when I retire, rehearsing in fancy what I will say to her, and burn with impatience by day.

The day of the rendezvous is the longest I have ever known, and evening approaches with lagging feet. I absent-mindedly perform a hundred duties, attend a fashionable dinner in town, and steal away at the earliest moment. At eleven o'clock I am awaiting her in the little Doric summer-house at the head of the water-stairs in the boat-basin, tense with anticipation.

It is a moonlight night, and the Seine beyond is luminous with silver. Flowers are beginning to reappear, and the air is heavy with their scent. As patiently as I can, I sit down to wait in the shadows, counting the sixty endless minutes as they drag by.

Sitting there, looking down the pool, I remember the day when little Sabine fell off the water-stair, and I took a ducking to haul her out — the day that Blanchette kissed my hand with such passionate gratitude; the day I realized I loved her. I smile softly and delightedly at the memory, then, as I think of poor little Sabine, the smile fades abruptly, and I am melted with pity.

As I wait, motionless and silent, it seems to me

that the little golden ghost of her is haunting this place. That the innocent sweetness of her — the elf-like gaiety of her — is all about me. The thought hallows the place for me, and it seems to me, in fancy, that the long hedge-bordered boat-basin, with the tree-branches arching overhead, is like the crypt of a cathedral, and that her spirit is with me, indeed. I am not afraid, but, on the contrary, am strangely and sadly content.

During the remainder of that hour of waiting, I am no longer impatient or restless, but am solemn in a profound meditation reviewing remote details of my life. Curiously exalted, am I, too, yet infinitely sad.

4. She is standing upon the shallow terrace step which gives onto the path, Blanchette — standing full in a shaft of moonlight. I had not heard her come, and for a long second I stare at her as if she were herself a ghost. It is exactly midnight.

She is bare-headed, and there is a diaphanous scarf around the slim whiteness of her shoulders. She is dressed in mourning, and her throat and arms and hands stand out against the sober background of her attire like alabaster, in the moonlight.

She calls, softly . . .

" Are you there? " And again, rather breathlessly — *" Êtes–vous là ? "*

I spring to my feet, athrill with happiness.

" Blanchette! "

Without another word she leaves the shaft of

moonlight, and comes to me in the shadows. Without a word she comes to the haven of my eager arms. So great is our emotion that we do not kiss, but cling to each other like children lost in a forest.

I hold her in my arms for a long time, my lips on her fragrant hair, and she sobs quietly, steadily. I draw her down beside me upon the bench in the little summer-house. And still she sobs, as if her heart would break. I pat her gently, attempting to sooth her; I lightly kiss her hair and throat and the back of her neck. She recovers herself a bit. . . . I kiss her eyelids, wet with tears. She recovers herself entirely, but still clings to me, her body wracked ever so often by a sob; I think of a wounded bird, pulsing with pain, held close in my hand.

"You're not to cry, darling . . ." I tell her, very low. "You mustn't, my lady — you mustn't!"

She turns up her tear-stained face to mine, smiling sadly at me at my use of the English phrase "my lady."

"I must, *mon cher,*" says she, as low. "I have wanted to weep in your arms, for many, many months. I have felt that I would die if I could not weep out my heart in your arms!"

I look at her hungrily. "And I have wanted you in these arms, my lady-Allah. For years and years and years again I've awakened in the night sick with longing for you — fairly aching to hold you in these blessed arms!"

She buries her face against my shoulder.

"I love you, Temple. Now that my baby is gone

— there is no one else . . . there never was anyone else."

"I am very proud, sweetheart," I tell her, and indeed, the pride within me is fit to burst my heart. Only it is a humble pride, a very precious sort of pride. "I am not fit to be loved by such as you. But you make me very happy when you say so."

"Sometimes I've wondered whether God has punished me for the sin of loving you, by taking away Sabine," confesses Blanchette, and there is a breathless, anguished question in her voice. "But He cannot have understood, if He did, for I have been a true wife and mother, have I not, *cher?*"

"The truest lady in all France!" I assure her, convincingly. "True in thought, as well as deed."

She is silent for a long moment.

"I have not always — been so true — in *thought,* Temple," says she, very low, and an inexplicable thrill comes over me. "'Twere impossible, to have been, with such a husband — and loving you," she adds, bravely. She looks up into my eyes with what I can only describe as a naked look, as if the very soul of her were looking out at me. "I'm a shameful, shameless woman, am I not, my lover?"

"Shameful as an angel may be shameful — shameless as a goddess," I tell her, sincerely. "No, dearest — love is neither shameful nor shameless. Love is truth, and there is never aught of shame in truth."

"Love is also sacrifice," says Blanchette. "How do I know that God has not demanded my Sabine as

a sacrifice for my love of you? If you only knew the nights I have lain awake, Temple — asking that of God! But He has never answered — and I am afraid!"

"Afraid of what, darling?"

"Of life. Of the future. Of myself, most of all!"

"But why?"

"What more does either life or the future hold for me?" she demands, bitterly. "Now that my baby has been taken from me, what can it hold?" I am silent, and she seems to divine something of my feelings. "There! — I didn't mean to hurt you, *amour!* You know I love you, and that your love is all I have to live for; but Temple, *mon coeur* — a mere man can never know what it means to lose a child . . . only a mother — even the most indifferent of mothers — can know that!"

"You are right, dear heart. . . ." I admit, full of pity for her. "But you must be brave — and, after all — " I hesitate, but decide to plunge. "After all, Blanchette, there can be — another. Even others."

"There can never be another Sabine for me," says Blanchette, biting her lip. "No child, however dear, can ever replace a lost child."

"Of course not, my dear. But perhaps another child can give you a new interest in life — something more to love and care for. There will be, doubtless — " again I hesitate, "other children."

"My husband?" with bitter scorn. "Never! No, never! . . . I'm afraid I hate my husband, Temple.

What little regard for him I ever had left, perished with my baby!"

"How has he treated you?" I ask, uncomfortably, trying to change the subject.

"Well enough I suppose, according to his lights," she returns, dully. . . . "Men do nothing to keep their wives' love until it is too late, and they have lost it!"

"He tried — to become reconciled?"

She nods.

"He meant to be very tender, but I told him to go back to his nymphs of the Palais Royal!" she goes on, rather bitterly. "We had quite a scene, but he saw that I was in earnest — so he went."

"Back to his — former haunts?"

"Yes, back to his *filles de joie!*" She becomes very thoughtful. "Do you know, Temple — I would still do almost anything in the world for him. He knows that. But I no longer love him. Sometimes I think I hate him, and sometimes I am not sure that I do. But of one thing I am certain — and that is, that I no longer love him, nor ever shall. In a way, I'm rather glad for him, that he has his temperament — that he can find spiritual satisfaction with a girl of the streets, as well as the other."

"No more glad," I tell her, rather ruefully, "than I!" I shrug my shoulders. "After all, Blanchette — I am only human." And as she is silent: "But you mustn't think that I am asking things of you, my dear. I love you too much to — to —" I fall silent, in my turn.

Her fingers seek my face, and gently stroke it.

"I know, lover . . . I know men, and I know life. And most of all," says she, in a queer voice, "I know — myself!"

"What do you mean?" I ask, very low, becoming suddenly stone-like.

"I have been thinking things over — thinking you and me over — for a long time," she admits, in hesitant tones. "Long before you came back from England I have been fighting with this problem — almost from the very night of your duel — the night following which you went away."

"I could not understand, at the time," I tell her. "Your refusing to see me, and all. I was rather hurt, you see. That's why I never wrote; but I was pretty miserable, all the time I was away, let me tell you!"

"I know," nods Blanchette. "And I was even more so, after Louis-Guillaume told me the truth of that night. But do you know, your not writing me was the best thing you could have done, from your viewpoint . . . you see, I am betraying my sex!"

"I wrote you dozens of letters — and destroyed them all. It was so hopeless . . ." As I speak, the thought comes to me that I am in no better condition than I was in, then. "And it still is hopeless — isn't it?"

"Do you — think so?" asks Blanchette, in a small, unfamiliar voice.

I seize her by the arms — tilt up her chin so that she must look into my eyes.

"Blanchette — do you know what you have just said?"

She smiles her half-sad, half-mocking smile.

"I do . . ." And as, astounded, I make no reply, her hands clutch my shoulders. "*Mon coeur,* you have won by your very acknowledgment of your defeat!"

"Blanchette —" I falter, "please don't — jest with me!"

"Silly boy! I'm not jesting — I'm only being brave with a courage it has taken me months and months to attain. As you said, Temple, there is naught of shame in truth; I love you, and you love me, and there can only be truth between us . . . Once," she continues, "the thought of my — Sabine — stood between us. I explained that to you. But since my baby is — gone — it has come to me that I have no further reason to deny you the happiness you have been gentleman enough to have refused to inveigle from me, before."

I hold her tight, and would speak, but she covers my lips with her fingers, as if she must finish while she has the courage of which she has spoken.

"I *am* shameful — shameless!" she whispers in my ear. "But for once I will speak out what is in my heart. Life is short, Temple, and there is precious little of happiness in it, God alone knows! . . . If it were only for myself, I would deny both you and myself — but since it is for you, and your happiness — since, things being the way they are, there is no

other way of your ever getting that happiness — I — I — "

" You — *what?* " I demand of her hoarsely, close to her ear.

" I am yours — if you want me," says she, so low that I can hardly hear. " If having me will make you any happier, *mon coeur* — I shall gladly make you happy! But if you take my gift and treat it lightly — if you should ever prove to be other than the gentleman I believe you to be — " her voice falters again, and I know there are tears in it.

" My darling, if I should ever betray the trust you put in me," I tell her earnestly, " may I be cursed by all the misfortunes that might come to human being! Dear heart, if I ever proved to be other than — " I am overcome with emotion, recognizing the rare quality of that bravery within her which has led her to offer herself to me; I drop to my knees, and bury my face in her lap. " Lady-Allah — I kneel to you . . . and on my knees I swear — "

But before I can say more, Blanchette has as swiftly dropped to her own knees, so that we face each other, there, kneeling on the grass.

" You shall not kneel to me," says she, and the look in her eyes is that of a yearning Madonna. " I'm no goddess, lover — I'm only a weak, very human woman — and I love you."

" God bless you for that," I murmur, thickly, " for your love is more than I shall ever be able to deserve! " I take her into my arms, very tenderly, as we face each other — still on our knees, on the soft

grass. " If only there were words enough in speech to tell you how very much I adore you, Blanchette! — How meaningless life would be for me without you! "

She looks me steadily in the eyes. Two tears well out of her own, and run down her cheeks, as she bites her lip.

" You do not think me a light woman, my own? " piteously. " You will not — hate me? "

For answer, I kiss her, and as our lips meet, I feel the warm softness of her strain toward me, cling to me. An ecstatic madness mounts to my brain . . . of a sudden we tacitly tear ourselves apart, both unnerved with desire, both shaken. We look at each other, trembling. . . .

" I love you," I tell her, fiercely. " I *love* you! "

Her slim arms cling to my neck, but she averts her face from my seeking lips.

" Please . . . not . . . now. I am — vile, Temple — vile! "

She is shivering, as if with an ague. I hold her tight, and soothe her again, as she rests with the side of her face on my shoulder . . . we are silent for a space, and I look over her scented hair to the pool, and the Seine, beyond. With the trees arching overhead, shutting out the moonlight, and an occasional shaft of silver filtering through to the still surface of the pool — much as if the moonlight were coming through a great stained-glass window — I suddenly see our retreat to be God's own cathedral. I see ourselves, kneeling on the grassy floor of the little Doric

summer-house, with its graceful classic columns, as kneeling at an outdoor altar, with the stars for altar-candles and the rustling trees for organ-pipes.

"Remember, darling," I whisper, englamoured, "the marriage vow of the ancient Romans? The phrase they used to bind their troth forever, before the gods and men?" And before she can answer, I repeat it, taken with my fantasy. "*Where you are Caius, I am Caia.*" . . .

She raises her head, and again I see her wistful smile. And her eyes are shining.

"That was what the woman said to her mate," says she. "That, lover — is mine to say . . ." Drawing back a little in my embrace, she looks me full in the face, and with her head tilted a bit to one side, like that of a young saint in an early Raphael, she repeats it. Repeats it in her musically husky voice with such a passionate solemnity that I am struck to awe, despite myself. Repeats it proudly, defiantly: "*Where you are Caius, I — am Caia!*"

I bow my head.

"*Where you are Caia — I am Caius.*"

I raise my head, and we gaze deep into one another's eyes, drunk with the high exaltation of the moment.

"For ever and ever," says Blanchette, almost breathlessly, on a half sobbing note.

"For ever and ever," I affirm reverently. "Amen. . . ."

She sways toward me with a little moan, there in

the imparadised shadows made by the moon-magic. And as we kiss the kiss which seals our spiritual and physical compact, I realize, with an ecstatic conviction that I have never known before and am not like to know ever again, that this is my wedding night.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

Of Magic-Making In General And The Séance Of Signor Cagliostro In Particular

TO POSSESS, and be possessed. To be important, above all others, to someone who is all-important to oneself. To be delightfully aware, at all times, that one matters tremendously to the person who matters to one more than all others on earth. To belong, body and soul, to another, and yet be the richest of men, knowing that one is slave and master together. To be in love with the one person of all humanity's millions who happens to be in love with oneself!

The days and weeks and months fly by, and I am idyllically happy. Looking back on these enraptured days and nights, it seems incredible that so much sheer happiness can possibly be encompassed in the emotional experience of one human being. Whether I am with Blanchette, or not with her, the high exaltation is there just the same. Every vignette of my daily life is roseate — every thought and action motivated by my inner joy.

I see Blanchette almost daily. We exchange notes and messages through Le Veillard, when we do not see each other, and meet in the most fantastic of places. I am like a young bridegroom, eternally enwrapt in my bride, ever pining to be at her side. Only, unlike the orthodox bridegroom, I do not see too much of her, nor see her in her lesser moments. Always our meetings are eagerly looked

forward to, our partings tinged with passionate regret.

We take long walks on the ramparts, or in the Bois. We meet to have midday *déjeuner* at out-of-the-way cafés. We meet at night in the little Doric summer-house near the boat-basin, to taste of ecstasy. . . .

We open our minds, each to the other, eager to turn the pattern of our past lives and thoughts and experiences inside out for our mutual edification. We are individually consumed by an insatiable curiosity; we come to know each other's idiosyncrasies and peculiarities — to understand our individual moods. We discover new faults, new virtues; we quarrel, sulk, and become reconciled most enjoyably. And with each discovery and quarrel the bond between us grows stronger and ever more beautiful.

We come to know the subtleties of love, we two adventurers into the romantic . . . The nuances of moods, the shades of temperament. We quarrel divinely, and adore divinely; we are god and goddess in our own right, monarchs of all we survey . . . the circumscribed extent of that surveyal, of course, being each other!

2. Meeting publicly — which is seldom, since Blanchette is in mourning — perhaps we over-play our rôles of casual neighbours and acquaintances. Our eyes, however, speak volumes. And when we have an opportunity for private converse, there is all the more to say.

Blanchette begins to advise me on my clothes, my activities, and my friendships; it is the way of a woman, of course, but I like it, to my own surprise. She becomes very friendly with Grandfather Franklin, for whom she has an almost idolatrous admiration, and invites us both to her house as often as she dares. I seldom accept these invitations, however. For if I do, I am almost certain to see Monsieur Caillot, and I am still gentleman enough — I tell myself — to avoid his friendship and acceptance of his hospitality, the circumstances being what they are. Blanchette says I am being absurd, but on this point I am firm, and avoid her husband and his house as much as I can. This, of course, gives both him and Grandfather the impression that neither he nor his household interest me, which, as I point out to Blanchette, is just as well.

Monsieur Caillot, I confess, is often in my thoughts. If there were any possibility of his divorcing Blanchette, life could hold no more for me — but their religion, unfortunately, forbids that. Often I wonder about the future — where this all will end. Blanchette refuses to talk about the future, however; apparently, she is content enough with the present and its happiness . . . a future without our being together she avers, would be too horrible to contemplate. I agree with her on this score, and am therefore doubly fearful of a possible separation; particularly, as it is bound to come, eventually. Grandfather has been American Minister in France for nearly nine years, now, and is ever talking of

resigning, and returning home to live out the few years he feels he has left. When he goes, necessarily, I must go with him. Occasionally I point this out to Blanchette, tentatively, but, woman-like, she will have none of it. Even if I should ever go back to America, says she, it would be only for a short time; it is inevitable that I would be sent back to Europe on a diplomatic mission. She has limitless faith in me, has Blanchette, and it is useless to try to explain to her the vagaries of party politics in America; worse than useless to mention that practically every one of Dr. Franklin's relatives has been forced out of public life.

It is hard for Blanchette to believe these things. Surely, she argues, if Dr. Franklin is the idol of France — has the veneration of all Europe — his own countrymen can certainly not fail to view him in the same light! A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, I quote to her, grimly . . . very well, then, says she — if America is so ungrateful and unappreciative of its great men, let Dr. Franklin spend the rest of his days in a country which loves him. The country in which are most of his dearest friends, his happiest memories . . . after all, says she, quaintly, 'twould be an ironical end indeed to such a career, to finish it in a land so infinitely more provincial — so infinitely less civilized — than France! Blanchette, like all true Gauls, believes that no country worth the living in exists, besides France. The Frenchman never travels, for to his mind there is nowhere more interesting to

go — nothing more important to see — than his own France, his very own Paris!

3. Blanchette is not altogether wrong in what she says regarding Grandfather and his ties to France. Most of his dearest friends who are living, are here. And practically all of his intellectual interests, not to mention Masonry.

Freemasonry has ever played an important part in Dr. Franklin's life, for he has cherished its doctrines since he was twenty. He has since adopted Whig ideas and French philosophical peculiarities — so that in America he is considered a good Christian, and in France a good atheist — but he has ever hung on, at the same time, to his Masonic principles. Which was just as well, for the Masonic lodges in the Colonies fostered the outbreak of the Revolution, by propagating a liberal doctrine among the upper middle classes. And much of Grandfather's influence in the Colonies was based on his Masonic connections.

When first we came to France, during the Revolution, French Freemasonry was experiencing a rebirth, largely due to the Orleans family. Being both Deist and philosopher, Grandfather entered their ranks immediately, and they were of infinite aid to him. Through the Masons, who controlled most of the French Government newspapers as well as French journals outside of France, he could insert all the propaganda for the American Cause he wished, and did so energetically, with the enthusias-

tic aid of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the famous Abbé Raynal, and Courtney Melmoth, the English writer, who was in his employ, as well as many others — including his friends Suard, Morellêt, and De la Dixmerie.

One of the anonymous letters he wrote as propaganda during that time is his now famous "*A letter From the Count de Schaumbergh to the Baron Hohendorf Commanding the Hessian Troops in America.*" This is the letter in which he has a petty German princeling instruct his general to be particular not to take care of his men, since England paid him thirty guineas apiece for each soldier killed — and he needed the money to pay for his approaching season of Italian Opera, and his last trip to Italy:

"*. . . I am about to send you some new recruits. Don't economize them. Remember glory before all things. Glory is true wealth. There is nothing degrades the soldier like the love of money. He must care only for honour and reputation, but this reputation must be acquired in the midst of dangers. A battle gained without costing the conqueror any blood is an inglorious success, while the conquered cover themselves with glory by perishing with their arms in their hands. Do you remember that of the* 300 *Lacedaemonians who defended the defile of Thermopylae, not one returned? How happy I should be could I say the same of my brave Hessians!*"

Grandfather's magnificent sarcasm at this time was most appropriate, for all Europe was infuriated

by this sale of men to England, to fight her battles for her, and contemptuous of Frederick the Great, who taxed the German princes for every mercenary soldier who passed through his dominions at the same rate he taxed cattle. The Masons jumped at the opportunity of distributing Dr. Franklin's pamphlet, since this was in the cause of their own defense of "The Dignity of Man."

In the course of time Grandfather became Grand Master of the Nine Sisters' Lodge, founded by Helvétius, and there is an interesting story in how this came about.

This Lodge included in its membership some of the most outspoken men in France, including Voltaire — who had come to his initiation on Grandfather's arm — Lalande, Greuze, Vernet and Lacépède, among others. On Voltaire's death, the Government forbade all celebrations in his honour, but the Lodge insisted on commemorating his apotheosis, at a session which terminated with a grand banquet and a toast to America — the session, incidentally, which the famous Diderot, Condorcet and D'Alembert did not dare to attend.

His Majesty, himself a Mason, was infuriated, and, too closely affiliated with Freemasonry to openly use his police, used his influence instead to have the Nine Sisters Lodge disbanded. At about this time it gave a great entertainment in honour of Madame, sister-in-law to the King, at which even uninitiated women were present. According to gen-

eral practice, tableaux were performed, showing the evolution of human kind as portrayed by the Book of Genesis, the Talmud, and Freemasonry. Usually the procedure in such cases was to have the first tableau represent Adam and Eve with the apple and the serpent. Instead, the Nine Sisters portrayed an Eve-Venus, tempted by Love, and pierced by his arrows. In consequence, many ladies fainted, others protested audibly, and still others pointedly took their departure; the affair created a great scandal, and the Lodge was peremptorily ordered to close.

To save themselves, they decided to elect Dr. Franklin the Grand Master, thinking that his prestige would protect them against the King. It did, and during Grandfather's leadership many noted men have come into the Lodge, including our friend Paul Jones.

4. Speaking of Masonry, I am naturally led to Egyptian Freemasonry, as practised by this Count Cagliostro, and therefore, back to Blanchette. For it is Blanchette who conceived the idea of our having a private séance with the great magician, who is the current sensation of all Paris.

We have been discussing, as we so often do, nowadays, the future, and our own future in particular, and Blanchette brings up the subject of the Grand Coptha, as he is known.

"Why don't we go to see Cagliostro, Temple?" she asks, one day, as we sit together in an alcove at

a concert at Madame de Brabant's. "Everyone else in town seems to be consulting him — indeed, one is quite *démodé* if one has not!"

"Grandfather privately believes that the man is a charlatan — a greater liar than was ever Baron Munchausen or Mendez Pinto!" I tell her, under cover of the music. "The Queen, who took up Mesmer at first, refuses to receive Cagliostro under any circumstances."

"But he is under the protection of Dr. Franklin's friend Vergennes, not to mention Cardinal Rohan," says Blanchette. "Everyone in Paris is talking about him. About his generosity to the poor, and his great wealth."

"And his wife's diamonds, not to mention her beauty, and his search for the Philosopher's Stone," I finish for her. "Yes, I've heard all that, and much more beside. But like Grandfather, I have my doubts of the man. His claims are too preposterous to ring true."

"What claims?" demands Blanchette, woman-like.

"That he is a pupil of the Sage Althotas, the foster-child of the Scherif of Mecca, and a son of the last King of Trebizond, and that he is nearly as old as Methuselah. A healer of diseases and abolisher of wrinkles, yes; Grand Master of the Egyptian Masonic Lodge of High Science and summoner of Spirits from the other world — perhaps; friend of the poor and impotent, most assuredly! But that he is so old, actually, that he claims to have dined with

Jesus Christ at Pontius Pilate's table — and to have witnessed the Crucifixion with his own eyes (all of which they say he told the Duc de Croÿ, one day) brands him as the king of liars, to my mind!"

"I've heard that story. And about the Banquet to the Dead, too. Only not the details. Do you know them?"

"Something about it. The Marquis de Luchet spread the story about the *Cénacle de Treize,* as I understand. It seems that there were six guests, beside Count Cagliostro, of whose number he was one. Cagliostro asked them to name six men who were dead, and he would materialize them as fellow-guests. They did so, and 'tis said that Voltaire, the Duc de Choiseul, Diderot, Montesquieu, d'Alembert, and the Abbé de Voisenon appeared in the vacant chairs between them. But I don't believe a word of it, and neither does Grandfather. He says that the Marquis de Luchet is a sensation-monger. By which he means that he presents only selected aspects of the truth!"

"Nevertheless," says Blanchette, wrinkling her brows, "I should like to consult him. Everyone does, and no one will think anything of it if we do go. And I think his young Countess is beautiful. She doesn't look a day over twenty, but they say she claims to have a son of thirty, who is an officer in the Dutch Navy."

"I've met her," I return, shortly. "Countess Seraphina is beautiful, I must admit. She has fluffy, straw-coloured hair, which she wears unpowdered;

a dazzling white skin; a small and delicately chiselled nose; full, rose-red lips; and large, deep blue eyes. She reminds me of a Dresden China doll, or a very little girl. But her diamonds are really magnificent, and her dress striking, to say the least."

"You seem to have noticed her rather closely," says Blanchette, in a cold voice to which I were wiser to take heed. "Rather closely, indeed!"

"You can't help noticing her, whether it's at a fête, or when she's riding her black mare Djerid in the Bois. Countess Seraphina is a marvellous horsewoman!"

"Indeed?" says Blanchette, with a curious inflection and making a pretence of listening to the music. This time I take notice.

"Good Lord, Blanchette! — You don't think for a moment that I could take the slightest interest in another woman, do you?" earnestly. "You're the only — "

"Hush!" whispers Blanchette, and blushes despite herself. She is annoyed, but pleased at the same time. "Tell me what Count Cagliostro is like."

"He's of medium height, rather stout, with an olive colouring, short neck, a round face, and broad, turned-up nose. But he has superb teeth, and speaks in a ringing, sonorous voice. If it weren't for his ridiculous pretensions, and his canary waistcoats, and musketeer hats with white plumes, I believe I'd like the man, for there's no denying his generosity, and I'm certain he has a strong sense of humour."

"What are his eyes like?" asks Blanchette, with

interest. "That is the first thing a woman would notice in a man; after that, his teeth and voice."

"His eyes are large and dark, and seem to be a mixture of fire and ice. Most extraordinary eyes — but then, he is a most extraordinary man!"

"I'd love to meet him!" exclaims Blanchette. "Do take me, Temple!"

"What for?" I demand, brusquely.

"To consult him about our future, for one thing, and to satisfy my curiosity, for another. The mystery of the man fascinates me!"

"Well, it doesn't fascinate me," I tell her, icily. "And I don't want to know the future — not from him, anyway!"

"*Seigneur!* — but I believe you're jealous!" accuses Blanchette, delightedly, and shows her dimples above the mocking smile.

"It is Madame's privilege to believe any absurdity she pleases!" I retort, offended.

Her smile retreats, but the dimples linger, mischievously.

"If you weren't jealous," remarks Blanchette, indifferently, "you'd take me to consult him. . . ."

In the end, of course, I take her.

5. Despite all I have heard of Count Alessandro di Cagliostro and his magic-making, and my own scorn of his fantastic reputation, not to mention Grandfather's, I am more than a little impressed as we drive up to the long flight of stone steps of "Cagliostrana" — the fine house in the Rue St.

Claude, which he has rented from the Marquise d'Orvilliers, and thus named. For as we emerge from the carriage, and I give Blanchette my arm, a gentleman whom I recognize by sight descends, politely makes way for us, and drives off in his own coach.

"Who was that?" Blanchette wants to know.

"The Seigneur of Seingalt — Jean de Seingalt Casanova," I tell her, with a covert glance back.

"The author of the *Memoires de Casanova?*"

"The same," I tell her, shortly.

Blanchette is impressed.

"If *he* visits Cagliostro," she whispers, "he cannot be such a charlatan, after all."

"He did not visit him for a séance, I'll wager something on that!" I inform her. "I've heard somewhere that they have some sort of occult dealings together — but as equals, not as master and disciple."

We are entering the *foyer* of the *entresol,* and the first thing which catches our eyes is a slab of black marble, upon which Pope's *Universal Prayer* is graven in gold letters. A servant greets us, notifies me that we are expected, and making obeisance in the Eastern manner, leads the way directly to Cagliostro's séance room. He draws back a heavy curtain, and two more lackeys clothed as Egyptian slaves as they are portrayed on the monuments at Thebes, draw back a second, and make a profound obeisance, in their turn. We enter, Blanchette clutching nervously at my arm.

The séance room is small and rather gloomy, and the walls are covered with hieroglyphics. There are statues here of Isis, Anubis, and the ox Apis, and I think of the stories I have heard that at the meetings of the Egyptian Lodge over which Cagliostro presides, the seven angels of the Egyptian paradise — Anael, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Gabriel, Zabriachel and Hanachiel (all of whom are believed to stand around the throne of God) — are said to appear.

Before I have time to take in more, Cagliostro himself greets us. He is wearing a robe of black silk, with hieroglyphics upon it embroidered in red, and an Arab turban of cloth-of-gold embroidered with jewels, upon his head. A chain of emeralds hangs *en sautoir* upon his breast, to which are attached many scarabs and cabalistic symbols. A sword with a handle shaped like a cross is suspended from a belt of red silk.

He greets us with perfect courtesy, asks after the health of Dr. Franklin, whom he pays very lavish compliments, and then, adding apologetically that he has several more séances to preside over this afternoon, seats us on a small *fauteuil* next to each other, and announces that we will begin. Before doing so, however, he explains that he conducts his readings by means of *colombes* and *pupilles,* in mirrors, carafes, and crystals. Which would we prefer?

I consult Blanchette, and choose the mirror.

"The past or the future?" asks Cagliostro, politely, if unnecessarily.

"Both," says Blanchette, quickly.

The famous magician bows, makes a sign to the two lackeys attired as slaves, and they pull apart a pair of black velvet curtains covered with hieroglyphics, on the wall facing us, revealing a great globular mirror, with what seems to be a frosted surface, for we can see our images in it only very indistinctly. Beneath this mirror is a curious Egyptian urn, which we had not at first noticed, and from this they silently produce a cloud of pungent incense of some unfamiliar smell. It covers the mirror, obscuring it entirely, so that we see our vague images fade away to nothingness. At the same time the subtle acridity of the sweet-scented incense becomes almost overpowering in the close room . . . after a few moments, it seems to mount to my brain, so that I feel very light and almost giddy, although not unpleasantly so. I seem to be floating in the air, and experience the curious sensation of believing that the spectator within me — the inner Temple Franklin who has never before broken through the walls of his body — has left me, and is viewing mundane affairs from outside my rigid body! And at the same time I know that Blanchette is undergoing the identical experience.

All the while Cagliostro, not paying us the slightest attention, is making cabalistic passes over the urn of incense, as he slowly sinks down to a cross-legged sitting posture on an oriental cushion, mumbling unintelligibly all the while. Although I have come here with a scornful mind, I am impressed

despite myself, and touched with a sense of mystery and the supernatural.

As he sits there, rigid, except for his moving hands, and the monotonous chant of his sonorous, booming voice, Cagliostro seems to go into a trance, and at the same time, the mistiness on the mirror seems to fade away before an unearthly, glowing light, behind. I stare at it, spell-bound.

"The Past!" announces Count Alessandro di Cagliostro, his own eyes fixed on the magic mirror.

6. The first picture which gently comes into being in the misty depths of the mirror, is a ship-board scene. I see myself as a boy of seventeen, standing near the rail of a ship which I recognize, immediately, to be the *Reprisal,* upon which we crossed to France nearly nine years ago. Near me is my little cousin, Benny Bache, a fair-haired, delicate little boy, and we are both watching Grandfather as he suddenly takes off his wig, flings it into the sea, and replaces it with a fur cap. . . . I remember the incident plainly. Although over seventy, Grandfather had thrown his wig overboard to symbolize the beginning of a new life, and replaced it with a fur cap to keep his head warm. He has never worn a wig since, even at Court, and his fur cap has become famous.

The picture fades, and in its place comes another. . . .

Voltaire is seated in a great chair at his Hôtel de Villette. His eyes are glittering and his face burning with fever, as he talks to Grandfather. Again I am

there, and of a sudden Grandfather seizes me dramatically, and pushes me before Voltaire, asking for his blessing. The great man does not hesitate, but places his emaciated hands upon my head, and blesses me in the name of God and Liberty. As he does so, other people in the picture, spectators, burst into sobs. . . . I watch this, amazed. For this is exactly what happened, and this moment one of the proudest memories of my life!

The picture fades, and another vignette grows into being. Blanchette suddenly clutches my hand.

We are standing on the water-stair of the boat-basin on the Caillot estate, as the little poodle-dog barks and runs about frantically on the landing below. I dive overboard, as I did once before, and emerge with little Sabine in my arms . . . ! Before my amazed eyes I see the incident we once lived through re-enact itself, up to the very moment when Blanchette prints a passionate kiss of gratitude upon my hand, when the picture begins to fade, like the others. I am so struck with awe, that I am actually numbed, and unable to turn to look at Blanchette. At the same moment a spasm of pain touches my heart at sight of the golden-headed little tot, streaming water in my arms, but clinging so confidently to my neck!

As the picture fades out, and another takes its place, the lump in my throat seems to grow to such size as to bid fair to choke me, for again I see Sabine, only this time she is very pale and immobile in the centre of a great bed surrounded by candles. A

priest and a nun pray at its foot, Dr. Purgon stands expressionless at its head, and Monsieur and Madame Caillot are on their knees at either side. Both are sobbing, and the hysterical grief on Blanchette's face is so heartrending that I involuntarily close my eyes to shut out the sight, as my hand grips hers hard.

When next I open them, the picture has faded like the rest, and I am aware of Blanchette's low sobbing, beside me. She is murmuring something, over and over again, and without being able to distinguish the words, I can sense them . . . *"Mon bébé! — ma petite enfant, mon bébé!"*

I would give anything to be able to take her in my arms, and comfort her, but to my horror, I cannot move. Before I can try to understand the phenomena of this curious langour which holds my limbs enthralled, Cagliostro's sonorous voice fills the room again:

"The Future!"

7. The first picture, oddly enough, seems to concern neither of us. Instead, we see Madame Brillon and Madame Helvétius seated together in the blue-and-gold salon at *Moulin Joli.* They are both red-eyed with weeping, and seem to be reproaching each other. Madame Brillon is white-faced with grief, and Madame Helvétius, looking very old, seems to be moaning *"Oh, Franklin, Franklin — why did you go?"* The next moment Cunégonde's mother seems to say, as I read her lips, *"His staying depended*

only on you!" . . . And as Madame Helvétius seems to reproach her in turn, in like manner, the picture fades. . . .

The next vignette is so arresting — so convincing in its poignant realism — that the memory of it makes me practically forget the last, which it follows. I see Blanchette — a transfigured Blanchette, at once more beautiful and yet somehow vaguely more mature — gazing down into a cradle, with yearning eyes. There is a baby lying within it, obviously several months old. And as I regard it, gurgling in its bed, I dimly see in its face a disturbing resemblance to someone I have once known, or seen. . . . I sit there, struggling with the thought, and of a sudden I remember. Blanchette's baby boy — for it is unmistakably Blanchette's — is the living image of a picture I once saw at Grandmother Deborah Franklin's, in Philadelphia, of their baby boy, Francis Folger Franklin, from the shock of whose death Grandfather has never entirely recovered, even to this day.

As I look at Blanchette's baby, there in its cradle I see that Blanchette is holding something in her hand. . . . I look closely, and recognize it to be a miniature of myself which I gave her only a few weeks ago. Hardly do I recognize it, when my attention goes back to the baby boy. To my horror, it seems to be choking — struggling pitifully for breath. Dr. Purgon has materialized from the thin air beside the cradle, and I see him shaking his head solemnly. As I watch, fascinated, Blanchette, still

clutching my miniature in her hand, stares at the little boy — who has suddenly ceased to choke, or move at all — and falls in a dead faint over the foot of the cradle.

At this point the picture fades, and I am so stunned with a feeling of illimitable horror that I hardly notice the vignette that follows. The palms of my hands are moist, and there is cold sweat on my brow, and, agonize though I do, I cannot force myself to turn to Blanchette . . . !

Unwillingly I watch the last picture of them all.

Grandfather Franklin and myself are standing at the rail of a ship, again, as we did in the first picture in the magic mirror. It is just at sunset. He hands me something which I cannot make out, and there is on his face a look of infinite sadness, of infinite pity. My own is stone-like, unnatural. . . . He puts an arm about my shoulders, as I stand there rigid, and as he does so, the picture fades.

8. The séance is ended.

The two Egyptian slaves have lit candles and retired: fresh air is flooding the room and dispersing the fumes of incense. They reappear bearing an ancient carafe of wine, and glasses. Cagliostro, with newly gained dark circles under his eyes which I cannot remember having seen when we arrived, and a rather wan air, in general, urges us to drink.

"This is the *Wine of Egypt* — the wine of Eternal Life," says he, solemnly. "You will please to drink."

We each sip a little. It is of an excellent *bouquet*, very sweet and somewhat cloying to the taste. Strangely enough, no sooner do the first drops touch my tongue, than the last of the incense fumes become a memory, and life is real and casual again. The very realism of the things we have seen in Cagliostro's mirror seems to have lost its importance, but the feeling of vague horror and an indefinable apprehension remain.

Blanchette, very pale and tense, asks him a question.

"Those — pictures we have seen — Signor Cagliostro . . . are they really — "

He holds up a majestic hand, and shakes his head.

"I cannot tell you anything, Madame. I did not see the pictures of which you speak."

"But you must have!" cries Blanchette, in amaze, and there is a note of hysteria in her voice. "Surely you can tell us why — "

Again he interrupts, courteously, but firmly.

"I was only the medium, Madame. What my clients see is for their eyes alone. I do not choose to see." He is all suaveness again. "Would you care to see my furnace in which I convert the base metals to gold, Signor Franklin?"

I hesitate, for I have heard much of this marvel of which he speaks, but as I glance at Blanchette, I see that she is very much upset, and resolve to get her home as soon as possible.

"Thank you very much, Count," I tell him. "But some other time, perhaps."

He glances at Blanchette shrewdly, and graciously acquiesces. He bows us to the door, sending his most flowery felicitations to the great Dr. Franklin.

I support Blanchette, who is trembling as with an ague, down the long flight of stone stairs, and into our carriage. Other coaches are already rolling into the courtyard. Ours is off with a lurch. I take her tenderly in my arms, for once oblivious to passersby. She is obviously frightened, is Blanchette, and pants a little as she presses a lacy handkerchief to her mouth.

"Temple — you saw — the little boy?"

I nod.

"It was an optical illusion, *mon adorée*. The man is a master trickster — a charlatan. Forget what you saw!"

"But it was true!" she exclaims, tensely. "About your saving — Sabine! . . . about her — death." The tears well up out of her eyes, and roll down her pale cheeks, unheeded. "It was all true, Temple. And the little boy — *our* little boy — he, too, died!" Of a sudden she is clinging to me, weeping hysterically. "I'm afraid, Temple! *Mon Dieu* — but I'm afraid!"

I attempt to soothe her, as best I can. My own nerves are overwrought, themselves.

"The man is a charlatan, dear heart! . . . Something told me not to give in to you, and bring you today!"

"I'm afraid . . . !" moans Blanchette, much like a little girl afraid of the dark.

"This Cagliostro is nothing but a damned charlatan!" I reiterate, over and over again. Nevertheless, it is a long time before I have her calmed, and, by fluent argument, partly convinced that I am right. But in my heart of hearts I am not so certain that I am.

9. An idea occurs to me . . .

"The whole thing is ridiculous," I declare. And look at her, laughingly. "Why, we haven't even got a little boy to lose!"

A peculiar look comes to Blanchette's face.

"No, we haven't," says she thoughtfully, "have we?" And is very quiet all the way home.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST

Wherein A Friendship Turns Platonic
And The Gods Begin To Laugh

TODAY is the second of May.

A momentous date, for me and for all of us at the Hôtel de Valentinois, for today's post has brought to Grandfather the long-waited summons from Congress which relieves him from his duties as American Minister in France, and makes him free to return home at last.

Dr. Franklin is a new man. I am secretly amazed at the change in him, so much does he brighten up. Somehow, I have never quite conceived him as being really happy to leave France, since most of his friends who are living are here. Mrs. Stevenson is dead, as is Fothergill and Sir John Pringle and Canton, not to mention many others. Still, it is none too pleasant for him here, either. Le Ray de Chaumont, who of recent days is said to be on the verge of bankruptcy, has become harrassed and exacting, and it is common gossip that his friend Vergennes may fall into disgrace at any time. And, after all, Grandfather is a very old man, and tired.

Nevertheless, I express my surprise that he is none too reluctant to leave this France which we have both come to love so well. He smiles his eternally cryptic smile as he answers.

"Sooner or later you're bound to find out, Temple, that there's no place like — home." He sighs. "The mere prospect of going home, my boy,

takes ten years off my shoulders . . . going — home!" He pronounces the word almost reverently, so that, inexplicably, I take umbrage.

"As far as I'm concerned, Grandfather, Paris is home. I can hardly remember any other." I think of Blanchette, and the first premonition of the loneliness consequent to our inevitable separation comes upon me. "I'm not at all sure that I want to go back to America."

Dr. Franklin looks at me in surprise.

"Not want to go back? Surely, Temple, you don't know what you're saying! Why, in America lies your career — your whole future, my boy!"

"How do I know that?" I demand, gloomily. "What is there for me to do, in America? Why, to all intents and purposes, Grandfather, I'm really a European. You know that as well as I do. I shall feel like a square peg in a round hole!"

"If you mean that you've become used to luxuries and the good things of life as Parisians and Londoners know them, you're right. But you'll speedily have to unlearn most of that, Temple — and it will be good for you, when you do. It's the fundamentals of life that count, not the fripperies." He scowls. "You're an American, Temple, and the place for you to build your life-work is in America — for your future and the future of your country."

"Can't I serve my country just as well over here?" I want to know, rather unreasonably.

"At some future time, undoubtedly," says Grand-

father, gravely. "But now, most certainly not — as you know only too well, yourself. You must go back home and stand on your own feet, Temple. You'll be the better man for it."

I am silent, knowing him to be right; and am infinitely downcast, thinking of Blanchette. He mistakes my obvious depression for something else, of course, and I dare not disillusion him.

"I have not many more days to be with you all, my boy," says Grandfather, rather awkwardly. "I should have thought that you would have liked to be with me until — the end." And sighs. "Still — there's always Monsieur Brillon's offer, if you prefer to stay. . . ."

I cannot look him in the eyes, such is my misery and humiliation.

"You know I could never leave you, Grandfather!" I own, quietly. "Of course I'll go back home with you!"

He pats me on the shoulder for a moment, before leaving his study.

"You're a good boy, Temple — a real Franklin! And some day you're going to be an even better American — one your country will be proud to own!"

We separate, silently.

2. That same evening, quite late, I meet Blanchette at our usual rendezvous at the boat-basin. Hardly waiting to greet her, I blurt out my news.

"We're going back to America!"

She stares at me blankly, then abruptly seats herself as I take her hands.

"Going *back?* When?"

"Sometime in June or July, I believe. Already Grandfather and Benny Bache are beginning to pack. . . . Dr. Franklin received his release from Congress by today's post."

Her lips part as she looks at me with blue eyes wide with shocked surprise.

"And you — you're going back, too?"

"Of course. What else is there for me to do? Besides, it is Grandfather's wish." I stare at the Seine, gloomily. "If he were not so old — if he did not need me so much — I should find a way to remain behind. . . . Perhaps with Monsieur Brillon, in his business. But as it is —"

"As it is," says Blanchette, dully, "you must go!"

"I must go . . ." I assent, nodding. "Home." I sigh, heavily. "To a home that will be almost a strange land to me." I snatch up her hands and kiss them passionately. "*Tonnerre de Dieu!* How shall I be able to exist anywhere else, without you!"

"You're going back home," says Blanchette, mechanically, almost to herself. "I knew that some day your country would claim you, but — *mon Dieu!* — somehow I never realized it would come so soon!" She goes on, half-bitterly. "We were too happy, Temple. Such happiness as ours has been too unreal to last. And now — it is at an end."

"We've a month, yet, darling. Perhaps two

months — yes, most certainly two months! And I shall come back soon again, I swear it!"

"If you do not," says Blanchette, simply, "I shall die."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" I bully her. "As a matter of fact, I really do believe you'll fall in love with your husband again, the moment I'm gone!"

But she ignores my intended jest.

"The séance, Temple — the mirror, at Cagliostro's — I see now that it was all true. He is no charlatan."

I think back, briefly.

"If you mean about the scene between Madame Brillon and Madame Helvétius, I suppose you're right, Blanchette," I confess, soberly. "I understand it, now . . . they were weeping over Grandfather's departure. . . . And the scene between him and myself on board the ship — that fits in, too."

"There was another scene in the magic mirror," says Blanchette, in a dull, queer voice. She does not look at me. "I — I have not slept last night, *mon cher* — from thinking about that scene."

"It is ridiculous — that!" Yet I hesitate. "Even you can see how absurd that was, or could possibly be, *mon adorée!*"

"*Peut-être,*" she admits, "and again, perhaps not." She looks at me shyly, and gently presses my hands, as if pleadingly. "Whether it were, or not, however — I think — I think . . ."

"What?" I demand, gravely, as she hesitates.

Her chin lifts bravely.

"I have been thinking it over for hours, Temple. And I'm afraid . . . call it superstition, if you wish — call it what you will. But the fact remains — I cannot help but feel . . ."

Again she pauses, and her eyes fill with tears as she bites her lower lip, embarrassed.

I look at her steadily.

"You mean, darling — " I suggest, very low, "that your mind would be more at ease, if — if — " I pause, meaningly, questioning her mutely.

She nods, sadly.

We look at each other for a very long time, saying nothing with our lips, but volumes with our eyes. We hold hands, and the current that passes from one body to another is like the struggle of the tides with the moon.

"It will be hard — now," I tell her, simply. "I'm just realizing how hard, my dearest dear."

Again she nods.

"And as hard for me, *mon amour.*" She suddenly takes up my hands and lays her cool face upon them. "But we are civilized human beings, Temple — not animals. Our love is a love unique within itself — a love exceeding all love. Let's prove it so."

I regard this woman I love; this witch-woman of fire and this goddess of ice, englamoured in the moonlight.

"Two months . . ." I murmur, almost to myself.

"Two months — and after that, perhaps — never to see you again!"

She looks up at me, then, her eyes at once yearning and yet denying.

"You know I love you, Temple," says she, tremulously. "If your own love is not big enough for sacrifice — for my sake — I will admit now that my love is not weak enough to withstand you. . . ." She hesitates, her expression a picture of suffering. "— I — leave the decision — in your hands. . . ."

Again for a long time I stare at her, as if seeing this woman for the first time.

"You are a brave woman, Blanchette. The bravest woman I shall ever know."

"No, I am a coward," she returns, sadly. "A frightened little coward. But those pictures of Cagliostro's, Temple — my husband — my honour . . ." A shuddering sigh escapes her. "I have given all I have to you, and it is still yours for the keeping. But I am afraid."

My heart swells with love and pride in her. My voice is husky with emotion.

"You are the bravest woman I know, Blanchette, and the finest. And I were the veriest cad to attempt to sully that fine bravery." I rise to my feet, and pull her up after me. Softly I kiss her tight-closed eyelids, and then, lingeringly, her hands. "Henceforward, my lady — we are friends. The dearest of friends — but only that!"

She opens her eyes and they are dewy with tears,

and the smile of her is that high and proud that I could fall at her feet in abject worship.

"You're a gentleman, Temple Franklin," says Blanchette Caillot. "I am proud to have given you my love, my gentleman from America."

And so we pace the path beside the pool. . . .

3. May seems to fly by, as does most of June.

It is a sad if exciting six weeks, these next. For all leave-takings have an element of sadness, and this leave-taking in particular is unusually poignant; 'twere ridiculous to pretend that any have hope of ever seeing Grandfather again, so old and feeble has he become, and there are fervent handshakes and innumerable sheddings of tears.

From all sides they come, his legions of friends, to bid him farewell forever. The Brillons, Madame Helvétius, Vergennes, Beaumarchais, Turgot. From the city and the Court, from the Academies and the cafés. From all classes and all ranks — all come to pay Dr. Franklin the homage worthy of an immortal, and to render their last affectionate respects. He is touched, is Grandfather, and I know that these last hours in France are at once the saddest and yet sweetest he has ever known.

There is a fury of packing cases with prized possessions and innumerable parting gifts, at Passy, and simultaneously there is a perfect deluge of entertainment, both for Grandfather and me. We make our last official visit to Versailles, and King Louis gives Grandfather a miniature of himself set in two cir-

cles of four hundred and eight diamonds. Marie-Antoinette, on her part, insists on giving him the use of her own royal litter to Havre. Dr. Franklin holds levée at the Count D'Armanda's salon that day with tears in his eyes . . .

Everyone is kind, everyone is overwhelmed with sorrow at our departure. The whole nation is said to be in sincere mourning, and the whole nation seems to want to say good-bye.

I have my full share of these farewells, of course, but they are naturally not as poignant for me as for Grandfather, who knows that he will never again see this France he has loved so well for nine long years. Yet, despite my inward determination to return to France some day at all costs, I am perhaps the most disconsolate man alive. For I am leaving Blanchette behind, and I know that the period which will elapse between the time I leave, and the time I see her again — if ever — will indubitably be the unhappiest period of my life.

Blanchette . . .

These are the weeks in which I realize as I have never realized before, the true depth of my love for Blanchette; in these six weeks of daily contact and yet daily self-denial it seems to me I age as many years. I do not sleep nights, for the thinking of her, and I can see that she herself grows more wan and *spirituelle,* and her sad smile sadder, when she does not think I notice it.

Every moment I can spare is spent with her, somehow, and we pass long hours talking of and planning

the future, when I shall return — or merely walk and hold hands with an almost childish desperation. It is a queer intimacy, this new intimacy, for us two. Strained, yet at the same time one with a communion of spirit which we have never known before; like the contented communion of a couple long married.

In these days I come to know all the nuances of ascents to Paradise and descents to Hell.

4. It is about the middle of June that Grandfather, Benny Bache (who has finally left his period of training with Didot, the famous Paris printer) and myself, go to dinner at the Brillons', and I find Blanchette there as a fellow-guest, not to mention Madame Helvétius and the Abbé Morellêt, among others.

Cunégonde is there with her husband, Monsieur Paris, and Aldegonde — now Madame de Malachelle — with hers. Cunégonde, it seems to me, has lost a deal of her looks, and has become much too matronly in appearance for her youth. Secretly comparing her, at table, with Blanchette (slim and exquisite in her patrician beauty) I think of the two of them as a virginally white lily and a prematurely full-blown rose. For Blanchette has known anguish and passion and the chastening of a great love, and remains somehow untouched and splendid for her very suffering; while Cunégonde, complacent in her wealth and tragically unaware that she has missed the real essence of romance, drinks life in deep draughts, and so loses its true bouquet.

There is much conversation at dinner, centring around Grandfather, of course, and Monsieur Brillon, who has had his most precious wines brought out for the occasion, insists that we drink toast after toast. Watching Blanchette, over the rim of my glass, I see red flags glowing in her cheeks, and an unwonted sparkle in her deep blue eyes. She smiles at me a small, pathetic smile, then attempts to divert attention, by draining her glass of wine. I know that she is not over-fond of heady wines, and that she must be as desperate as am I with bitterness and longing. It is as much as I can do to sit there, unmoved, and it is with an infinite relief that I arise when Madame Brillon gives the signal.

There is music in the music-room, afterwards (Grandfather accompanying his favourite songs for the last time at *Moulin Joli,* on his harmonica) and at the first opportunity I go directly over to Blanchette, and ask her to walk with me upon the terrace. After a perceptible hesitation, she assents.

We slip out, quietly, and unnoticed, and emerge upon that very spot where, so long ago, we held our first conversation. We hesitate here, wordless, for a moment, and contemplate the broad sweep of the Stair of a Hundred Steps, and the lawn and river, below and beyond — all bathed in soft moonlight. Both of us are thinking of that other night in another June.

"What a pretty moon!" says a dreamy voice beside me, from out the past.

"A most superior moon," I agree, as upon that

other occasion. "A moon for love-making — for — "

"Romantic spectacles!" adds Blanchette. And we both laugh. But our mirth is a nervous, unmirthful mirth. We are both of us taut and tense with overcharged emotion.

"There are no more — romantic spectacles," I observe, after a moment, and find, with surprise, that it is with difficulty I can control my voice. "Perhaps it is just as well."

"Perhaps," assents Blanchette, in a queer, strained voice. "We are old, Temple — you and I. We are a thousand years old."

"A million, you mean," I tell her, cynically. "How long is it, Madame Caillot — since you and I stood upon this terrace insulting each other so amiably?"

"Even the moon isn't that old, Monsieur Franklin," says Blanchette, after a moment, and there is a hint of a sob in her voice. She presses a bit of lace to her lips, and turns away from me, abruptly — unwittingly giving me her profile in the moonlight . . . the dear, cameo-like profile of her! I shiver, and grip the stone balustrade as a wave of hopeless yearning and despair engulfs me. I cannot bear to watch her sad profile. I grasp her elbow, desperately.

"Let's walk down to the garden!"

"Why?" she wants to know inconsequentially, still immobile.

"It's the stairs," I tell her. "I want to walk with

you down that staircase in the moonlight — down to the Seine. I want to look back at the staircase, and fix it — and you — in my memory. I want to think of you and me in the long days and nights to come — descending together a romantic staircase on an enchanted night in June." I pause, and draw a deep breath; my head is hot with the fumes of the wine we have had at dinner. "I want to stuff my mind with memories enough to last me 'til I die."

She draws a quick, tortured breath, hesitates a moment, then, suddenly seizing my hand, tilts her chin, and leads the way. Her eyes are shining.

Together, very ceremoniously, we slowly descend the Stair of a Hundred Steps — flight by moon-drenched flight.

Together, as slowly — and as ceremoniously — we cross the expanse of lawn toward the river.

Together, still stiffly and impersonally, we stand on the bank of the Seine, and look back at the great staircase shining like silver in the magic of the June night. The scent of flowers is heavy in the air, and the river still as still . . .

Together, after an eternity, we walk hand in hand down the river bank, to end, at last, in that shadowed grotto where once I came on Cunégonde to tell her of my Grandfather's projected coming to ask her parents for her hand.

The flower-scent is like strong perfume, now, and as overpowering. A sun-dial, in the centre of the glade, is ghostly in the shadows, for there is deep

gloom here, in marked contrast to the silvered expanse of the winding river.

We seat ourselves upon the stone bench upon which Cunégonde once sat and embroidered, while I lay at her feet.

5. "A few more weeks — another fortnight, perhaps — and we'll be gone. Gone to America."

"Don't talk about it. *Please.*" Her bosom is rising and falling more quickly than is its wont, as she averts her head from me. "I can't bear to hear you say it!"

"And I," I tell her, deliberately, "am going mad from saying it to myself. Every day and every night I tell it to myself; 'a day less, now — a night less!' . . . and there will be only the grey sea, and the grey sky. And my heart will be grey. And all my life to come!"

"You're coming back!" says Blanchette, very low. "Don't torture me — you know you're coming back."

"Perhaps. And perhaps not. I shall probably die of longing for you — eat out my heart before ever I see you again."

"Temple — *adoré!* Don't say these things! — You are breaking my heart. . . !"

I drop to my knees before her, and bury my burning face in her lap. I shudder, at the dear contact of her silken gown against my skin.

"I would not hurt you for all the world, *ma bonne amie* . . . but I cannot help it. I love you so, it

is tearing the soul out of me — and now — a few more weeks, and the soul of me shall die, and the heart beside." I seize her hand, and cover it with kisses. Her other moves tenderly in my hair. "My love for you is choking me, Blanchette. It is a mountain, and I am a mole . . . it is crushing me!"

"Temple! — I cannot stand it . . . be kind to me, Temple — be kind!"

There is such anguish in her voice, such love and suffering, that I grit my teeth, and drag myself to my feet. I stand there, steeped in a welter of voluptuous sadness.

"I am a selfish beast, Blanchette. Forgive me, if you can."

She rises in her turn, comes close, and her hands slide up to my shoulders. I lay my own upon them, as if to remove them.

"Don't do that, dear — " I mutter hoarsely. "I am only — human!"

Her face is upturned to mine, beseechingly. Her eyes are tight-closed, in pain.

"And I — Temple."

Her fingers slide behind my neck, and interlock, and I, who would remove them, am seized with a strange trembling.

"For God's sake, don't — Blanchette! I love you!"

She opens her eyes, and they are humid with the subtleties of surrender.

"And I — Temple . . ."

She sways toward me so abruptly that I think she has swooned, and I catch her up in my arms. The next moment she drags down my head to hers . . . our lips, long-denied, meet tremulously. Then brutally.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

On Sins Of The Fathers, And Sons Who Joust With Windmills

WE are lunatic with joy, we two. Obsessed with a species of madness which knows no future and knows no past; an obsession which knows naught of time or place or circumstance. These are our last hours in Paradise. Soon the Angel of Destiny will stand above us with flaming sword, and we must quit our Eden. Only separately. Therein lies our tragedy, which was spared to the first outcast lovers, in the dawn of the world.

We are drinking deep draughts of ecstasy, shutting our eyes and closing our ears to the bitterness of the dregs that lie beneath. So pitifully few days and nights remain . . . the tragedy of the wasted weeks!

And so the final precious hours slide by on wings of lightning — bitter-sweet hours. And as the time for taking leave draws nigh, all the love and longing and bitterness within me seems to crystallize, and become the essence of desperation.

For I wake up on the morning of the First of July, and realize that I cannot give up the woman I love. I cannot go away and leave Blanchette behind.

2. It is with clear determination in mind, then, that I go to meet Blanchette today. As a matter of fact, this is no clandestine meeting, as this evening Le Veillard and myself have promised to take Ma-

dame Caillot and the Marquise de Tonnerre (she who was Mademoiselle de Passy), to the Fair at St. Germain. Monsieur Caillot is away on business, and the young Marquis is at Court.

We drive off, then, the four of us in the De Tonnerre coach with its four horses, and its red velvet upholstering with gilt edging which is the special privilege of those ladies who have the hereditary "*honneurs*" of the Louvre, and the right to sit on the famous "tabouret" in the King's presence. (Other particular privileges of these favoured few who can "prove" their descent back to 1400, before which no nobility was created, is the right to a dais and dais-chamber in their homes.)

In this elegant equipage, then, we go to no other place than the most inelegant Fair at St. Germain, where fashionables from Versailles rub shoulders with the Parisans, or "frogs" (as the Court terms the *bourgeois* city folk), in a sort of sublimated slumming expedition. Here we meet a group of other friends, whose party we join.

There is a great display of fireworks, and one walks up and down covered galleries, lined by two rows of illuminated stalls, between which are booths showing puppet shows, jugglers, dwarfs, performing dogs, giants, and others with tarts and pastries. This is not our goal, however; we have all come to see a rare and unusual beast never before seen in France, which has been brought from the Indies at great trouble and expense by an enterprising Dutch sea-captain. This is a rhinoceros, and, although it was

displayed at Versailles before being brought here, none of our party had happened to have visited it. The curious animal is taken from place to place in a cage on four wheels, which is drawn by six horses. Its daily ration is fifty pounds of hay, fifteen pounds of bread, and fifteen buckets of water. We each pay three livres and twelve sous for a ticket, to enter its tent, and amuse ourselves by feeding it orange-peels, which the ladies delightedly throw into its cavernous jaws.

Blanchette alone does not partake in this amusement, for I have drawn her aside, in the hope of talking to her. No one of our party seems to notice, and I whisper to Louis-Guillaume — who is patiently supplying the pretty Marquise with orange-peels which he has just bought — that we will wait for them in the coach. Unobtrusively, then, do we slip away, and lose ourselves in the crowd. Not long after, finding it impossible to carry on any serious converse, even in the privacy of a great crowd, we go back to our coach, where the coachman and footmen are standing at the horses' heads, waiting, and enter the carriage. Here, although we are in plain sight of anyone who chooses to look, we may say what we wish, without being overheard.

Blanchette seats herself on the back seat, her voluminous skirts billowing about her like a young goddess, with her hair dressed high with plumes, and her bust tapering down to a long V, as is the fashion. I am opposite her, and I note that she looks troubled, now, that we are away from the gaze of our friends.

For the first time I realize that she has not been herself all evening; a more subdued, quiet Blanchette than I have seen in many weeks. Usually, on an expedition of pleasure such as this, she is the personification of gaiety and excited mischief; taking keen pleasure in the evening's entertainment like a little girl — her enthusiasm bubbling from her in an irrepressible stream of wit and humour . . . it is for this side of her personality that her noble friends love her, and are pleased to include her in their parties, at times — for rank is rank, in France, and birth is birth. Although Blanchette is well-born, she is not noble, and in this society where etiquette is ruthlessly paramount, this is an unusual thing, and a tribute to the charm of my Blanchette.

We sit alone, then, apart from the teeming crowd and the flaring torches, and regard each other. I smile at her, but she does not smile back. I take possession of her hand, under a fold of her gown.

"I have something to tell you, Blanchette," I begin, eagerly. "And something to ask you."

"What is it?" she wants to know.

"Just this —" I tell her, earnestly. "I cannot bear the thought of leaving you behind and going to America. We must — do something!"

She looks away, and I am astonished to see that her eyes are suddenly ashine with tears.

"What's the matter, darling?"

"I have something — to tell you —" says Blanchette, very low. And a faint colour suffuses her neck and face.

"What is it?" I demand, in my turn.

"Cagliostro . . ." she begins, and then is unaccountably all confusion.

"What about Count Cagliostro, dear heart?"

She suddenly looks at me, very steadily, but with a queer admixture of fear and pleading in her eyes.

"His pictures in the mirror, *cher* . . . about the — future." She wets her lips, nervously. "I must tell you, Temple — that the man is no — charlatan!"

I stare at her in amaze. And my mind flies back to that vignette of the child who resembled so strongly the picture I have seen of Grandfather Franklin's long-lost little Frankie.

"You mean . . . ?"

She bites her lip. Then nods her head, her eyes on mine, all the while.

I am stunned, shaken. Yet, too, so great is my love for her that I am curiously, gloriously exalted. I squeeze her hand, and break into a fatuous grin.

"Darling . . . !"

She smiles her half-sad little smile, then looks away.

"I'm glad you're not — angry . . . it would have been unbearable if you were angry."

"Angry? I?" I cannot resist chuckling. "Why, I am —" I interrupt myself. "Are you — *sure* — *chérie?*"

Her smile becomes half-shy, half-anxious.

"No, Temple. I'm not . . . but I have a feeling — a premonition." She forces herself to look at me, again. "I'm afraid — I'm *quite* — sure!"

"Good!" I exclaim. "This settles it — settles everything!"

"Settles what?"

"What I had to tell you . . . I was going to propose," I continue, rapidly, "that you come away with me to America. I cannot tolerate the thought of leaving you behind — with that man who means nothing to you. And I cannot bear the thought of not seeing you again, perhaps, for years!" I seize both her hands in mine. "Your news makes our course clear — inevitable! Blanchette, darling — you must come away with me to America, and we'll start life over again, together. You and I — and the — the — "

"And our — son," she adds, softly. And there is in her eyes such tender happiness that the mere sight of it catches me by the throat, so that I am husky when I speak. . . .

"It is the only way out, *mon adorée* . . . thank God, it is the *only way out!*"

We are then both silent for a moment.

"But the obstacles . . ." murmurs Blanchette. "My husband. Your grandfather." A kind of timidity comes over her. "What will people say?"

"To Perdition with what people will say!" I burst out. "It's our lives we have to lead, not other people's lives! And our happiness — our whole future — is at stake!"

"But our families," she protests, feebly.

"What difference does their opinion make?" I demand, impatiently. "You mean nothing to your husband, and he means nothing to you. With him,

you will live a life of loneliness and neglect. With me . . . well, Blanchette — we are young, and all life is before us. America is a new country and there are opportunities to grow with it. It is our duty to ourselves and our happiness to take this course, and none other. Moreover, it is our duty, now — to — someone else."

She digests this for a space, torn between inclination and sense of propriety, as I watch her anxiously.

"What of Dr. Franklin?" she demands, after a bit. "'Twill be impossible for us to do this thing without his consent. At least, lacking his consent, without his knowledge."

This is true, and I ponder it briefly.

"You are right. We must get his consent, somehow, for without it our problem will be the worse. We cannot move without money, and I have none of my own to speak of, worse luck!"

"Nor have I," says she. "But there are my jewels. They cannot bring much, but you can get something from their sale."

I shake my head decisively.

"Rather than take those from you, my dearest, I'd stay on in France, and wait until I could make enough to finance us. Caron could get me an opening in some business venture, I doubt not."

"If we do this thing, it must be done soon," points out Blanchette. "Or it will be — too late. No, our only hope is in your grandfather. You could repay him some day, after we get settled in America, and you have made some money."

I consider this, and nod acquiescence.

"You're right; I must speak to Grandfather. After all, my happiness must mean something to him. Particularly since the Cunégonde fiasco."

"He's a good man — the kindest in the world!" exclaims Blanchette. "And he loves you. I'm sure we can win him around. We *must* . . . and I will go with you when you talk to him. That is the only way."

I see the wisdom of this, too, and not without some secret relief. The prospect of approaching Grandfather in an affair of this kind is none too pleasant to contemplate.

"We'll talk to him the first thing in the morning!" I decide. "Or even tonight, if he is home when we return, and not abed."

Blanchette, however, shakes her head, and I see that there is a small panic in her eyes.

"No — we must wait a day or two. I must have time to think over this thing. After all, it is a great step for a woman to take, Temple — far greater than the same for a man. And, besides, I shall know in that time if what I fear — is true."

"True or not, darling, 'tis the same thing!" I declare. "We love each other, and cannot bear to be separated. We're going to America to start life anew, and if we can't do so in the colonies, we'll go out to the frontier, somewhere. . . . There's thousands of places. No one will know, and no one will care. And we'll have each other, and the world beside!"

Her eyes light up at the picture I paint, but nevertheless does she insist on waiting a day or two before we interview Dr. Franklin. The longer we delay, she argues, the greater the advantage, for he will then have less time in which to think the matter over, and be more inclined to be taken by storm. I see the wisdom of what she says, finally, and agree.

At just this moment we see our group of friends approaching. Whereupon we quickly release hands, sit back in our respective seats, and pretend a profound absorption in the display of fire-works which is entertaining the crowds of the Fair, in the nocturnal vault of the midsummer sky.

3. Through a combination of unforeseen circumstances, due to our nearing departure, I do not see Blanchette for fully two days, but communicate with her by means of a series of notes, brief and noncommittal on her part.

On the morning of the third day I decide it is high time to carry out our intended interview with Grandfather, and write Blanchette to that effect, asking her to come over soon after breakfast, for the ostensible purpose of asking him to do an errand for her while in England, on his way back. I tell her that I shall be on the look-out for her, and the moment she arrives, and we three are closeted together, I shall see to it that we are not disturbed.

So on the morning of the third day, I await her arrival, in a state of nerves and tense anticipation which can well be imagined, and successfully shunt

off all engagements from Grandfather, for a while. Only am I unable to keep Paul Jones from his study, who arrives while I am elsewhere, and whom I suddenly find engaged in conversation with Grandfather. The Commodore has just returned from an inspection of the French fleet, it seems, and he and Grandfather are discussing the French — the subject inspired, no doubt, by Grandfather's reluctance to leave the nation he loves so well.

"I am exceedingly pleased with your account of the French politeness and civility, as it appeared among the officers and people of their fleet," he tells Paul, as I wait, chafing. "They have certainly advanced in those respects beyond the English. I have found them here a most amiable nation to live with. The Spaniards are by common opinion supposed to be cruel, the English proud, the Scotch insolent, the Dutch avaricious, *et cetera,* but I think the French have no national vice ascribed to them. They have some frivolities, but they are harmless." He smiles benignantly. "To dress their heads so that a hat cannot be put on them, and then wear their hats under their arms, and to fill their noses with tobacco, may be called follies, perhaps, but they are not vices. They are only the effects of the tyranny of custom. In short, there is nothing wanting in the character of a Frenchman that belongs to that of an agreeable and worthy man. There are only some trifles surplus, or which might be spared."

"For my part," says Paul, complacently, "I feel right now as if I can spend the rest of my life in

France." And I know he is thinking of his Aimée and their little son. "I don't see why you must go back to America, after all, Doctor. Say what you will, we're a provincial people, and you, sir, are a cosmopolitan. You can never possibly be as happy in Philadelphia as in Paris."

"I'm an American," says Grandfather, gently. "And I belong where I belong — and that is, home, in America, among my fellow-countrymen. Like most Americans abroad, Paul, you and Temple here actually affect to despise your country, or, at any rate, belittle it." He smiles. "Some day both of you — as well as every other American in France — will realize that, in the final analysis, there's no place like home — no country like your own."

We both hotly protest his aspersion on our patriotism, perhaps as Dr. Franklin meant us to.

"*I* like it here, nevertheless," I amend, having done this. "I like the country, the life, the people. I like their manner of government and their system of hereditary caste and rank. It differentiates people — sets one apart from another."

"There's something to be said for the nobility," Paul agrees with me, rather wistfully. Born a Scotch gardener's son, Paul Jones has ever had a tremendous respect for titles and social position, although, it must be added in all fairness, an equal amount of self-respect. Once settled in Virginia, he delighted to pose as one of the landed gentry, and during his later career, here in France, where he has mixed with the highest society of France on an equal

footing, he has been quite in his element. Grandfather knows this, and deplores the slightly snobbish tendencies of both Paul and myself; this, perhaps, actuates his next remarks, made rather severely.

"The descending honour, to posterity who could have no share in obtaining it, is not only groundless and absurd, but often hurtful to that posterity, since it is apt to make them proud — disdaining to be employed in useful arts, and thence falling into poverty, and all the meannesses, servility and wretchedness attending it, which is the present case of much of what is called the *noblesse* in Europe."

"Still, there's something picturesque and romantic about a title," I interpose. "It adds colour and dignity to names."

"In old time there was no disrespect for men and women to be called by their own names," says Grandfather, a twinkle in his eye. "Adam was never called *Master* Adam; we never read of Noah, *Esquire,* Lot, *Knight* and *Baronet,* nor the *Right Honourable* Abraham, *Viscount* of Mesopotamia, *Baron* of Canaan! No — no — they were plain men, honest country graziers that took care of their families and flocks. Moses was a great prophet, and Aaron a priest of the Lord. But we never heard of the *Reverend* Moses, nor the *Right Reverend Father* in God Aaron, by Divine Providence, *Lord Arch-Bishop* of Israel. Thou never sawest *Madame* Rebecca in the Bible, nor my *Lady* Rachel. Nor Mary, though a Princess of the Blood after the

death of Joseph, called the Princess Dowager of Nazareth!"

We cannot help laughing at this viewpoint on "Hat Honour," as Grandfather calls it. Before we can discuss the subject further, however, a servant knocks, and enters.

"Madame Caillot calling upon your excellency," he announces, obsequiously. "She asks that she might see you alone."

"Certainly!" says Grandfather, rising. "You'll pardon me for a few minutes, Commodore?"

"Pardon you?" exclaims Paul Jones. "*Tonnerre de Brest!*—thanks for the reminder. I've an urgent errand with Monsieur de Chaumont!"

And with a hasty farewell, he is gone. Hardly has he disappeared through one door, when Blanchette appears in another. She is pale, but composed, and, it seems to me, more beautiful in this moment than I have ever seen her before, in all my life.

Advancing toward her, I quietly close the door, turn the key in the lock, and take her by the hand. We face Dr. Franklin, then—determination in our eyes and apprehension in our hearts.

Grandfather Franklin, noting our actions, looks at the two of us in a startled way over the rim of his spectacles as he kisses Blanchette's free hand in greeting, then heavily seats himself in his great chair. He has realized that something is afoot, and is stalling for time to collect himself . . . he slowly removes his spectacles.

"Sit down, Blanchette," says he, conversationally. "I trust Monsieur is in the best of health?"

4. She does not seat herself, however, but draws closer to me.

"The health of *monsieur mon mari* is not of the slightest consequence to me, your excellency," says Blanchette, rather breathlessly, but defiant.

"Dear me!" Grandfather is obviously upset, and, it seems to me, a little relieved. "I'm afraid you've been quarrelling!" He beams, paternally. "I'm glad you came to me, Blanchette — I'll tell off that brute of a husband of yours in proper fashion!"

"You misunderstand, *Monsieur* —" says Blanchette, a spot of colour appearing in each cheek. "We have not quarrelled at all. *Seigneur! — non!* It is worse — far worse than that!"

"Perhaps you're considering a quarrel, then, my dear, and have come to me for the loan of a few choice epithets and telling arguments?" jests Dr. Franklin, by no means unused to the rôle of being confidant and ally to misunderstood wives. "If so, you've come to the right place!"

"I hope so," says Blanchette, desperately. "You see, Père Franklin, I need help and advice, and you're the only person in the world who can give it to me!"

"Gladly," returns Grandfather, benignly. "You know I'm scandalously fond of you . . . now, what exactly is the trouble?"

Blanchette looks at me, and then back at him.

"I'm in love with another man," she announces, slim and straight as a sword. "Madly in love with another man."

"Who's just as madly in love with her!" I put in, earnestly.

"So you've taken Temple into your confidence, first, eh?" says Grandfather. "I ought to be offended, but I don't blame you — he's had enough experience with the ladies to advise anyone!" And he smiles at me as I glare at him, and begins to replace his spectacles. "Who is this so fortunate, if rather indiscreet, man — if I may be permitted to ask?"

Blanchette draws a deep breath, and clutches my hand.

"Temple . . . !" she announces, simply.

"Good Lord!" In his dismay, Grandfather drops his glasses to his lap. And looks from one of us to the other. "Is this your idea of — a joke — young man?" he demands, severely, of me. But by the expression on his face, I know that he realizes well enough how little of a joke it is.

I step forward.

"It happens to be true, Grandfather. Blanchette and I love each other. We are mad about each other, and cannot go on living without each other." I hesitate, defiantly. "Nor do we intend to!"

"Bless my soul!" Dr. Franklin is obviously taken aback. "How long has this — thing — been going on?"

"We have been in love with each other practically from the first moment we met," I tell him, rapidly. "We realized it soon afterward — not long after the Brillons refused to let me marry Cunégonde. We have been in love — honestly, in love, Grandfather — ever since."

He says nothing, perhaps because of sheer surprise, and I sweep on, hurriedly.

"This is not an infatuation, Grandfather, but a serious love." I look at Blanchette, and she nods. "We're both grown-up, sensible people, and know what we're about."

"Grown-up, perhaps," observes Grandfather, "but hardly sensible . . . what about Monsieur Caillot?"

"He means nothing to me," interjects Blanchette, "nor I to him. Our marriage was really a *marriage de convenance,* and since its very beginning, he's been repeatedly unfaithful to me, not to mention neglectful. While I had Sabine — " here her voice breaks, "it did not mean so much, although I was already in love with Temple, who is the first man I have ever really loved in my life. After Sabine — passed away — " again she gulps a sob, "I had no one . . . but Temple."

"And you'll always have me, *mon amour,*" I tell her, tenderly, putting my arm about her waist.

Grandfather suddenly takes on a badgered look, and I note that the hand which holds the spectacles is shaking.

"I thought I had raised you to be a gentleman,

Temple," says he, bitterly, as if he has not even heard Blanchette's remarks. "I hardly dreamed that, with all your faults, you'd stoop so low as to abuse a man's hospitality by stealing his wife!"

"He did not steal me!" cries Blanchette, indignantly. "I came to him of my own accord. I loved him, and he loved me, and whatever happened was beyond our power to control." And as Grandfather still eyes me with cynical distaste. "Temple Franklin is just as much a gentleman as — as — *you* are!" she adds, half hysterically.

"There is so much truth in that observation," says Grandfather, quietly, "that I cannot help but agree with you. You are right, my dear. If there is anything to be said for heredity, my grandson can hardly be expected to act very differently than I have done, at times!" He sighs, heavily. "I was afraid of something like this," he muses, sighing aloud. "Afraid . . ."

There is such bitterness in his tones, that I intuitively realize that he is thinking of what he terms the "errata" of his past . . . the manner of my father's coming into the world. The manner, for that matter, of my own. Blood, I can almost see him thinking, will tell. . . . Nature exacts the last iota of vengeance, if not in one generation, then in another . . . the sins of the fathers . . .

"I am sorry, Grandfather," I begin, awkwardly. And hesitate. "But it is too late, now. We love each other."

"And what is that to me?" he wants to know,

coldly. "You are an adult, responsible for your own actions. Your personal affairs are your own. . . ." He puts a hand to his brow, momentarily, as if in great weariness. "I wish to Jehovah you had let them remain your own!"

I stiffen, my pride stung, but there is such appeal in Blanchette's eyes — such desperation in our situation — that I needs must make my intended appeal.

"Grandfather," I begin, desperately. "We have offended you, I know — and we would both give the world not to have had reason to do so. But we love each other, and we — we —" Again I hesitate. "Grandfather — you simply must help us!"

"In what way could I possibly help you?" he wants to know. "If you mean by that that I permit you to stay on in France, I flatly refuse . . . enough harm has been done, already. If you disobey me, I shall be forced to ask the King to have you put out of the country, if necessary!"

For the first time I realize how deeply this affair has hit him, but I cannot now give up my goal.

"I don't want to stay behind, Grandfather. I want to go back with you, to America."

He looks infinitely relieved.

"You show more sense than I gave you credit for. What do you wish of me, then?" He looks at Blanchette, and his eyes soften. "I'm sorry for you, child — sorry for you both. But we cannot always have the things we want, in this life. We must all make sacrifices, large or small."

"We love each other too much to give one another up!" I tell him, earnestly. "Grandfather — Blanchette is willing to go to America with me — and settle, perhaps, somewhere on the frontier, where no one would know us. We want —"

He rises to his feet, transformed.

"You are mad! Both of you!" And as we two begin to plead, cuts us short, harshly. "What you suggest is preposterous — impossible!"

"Why is it impossible?" I demand, doggedly. "If you help us, even secretly, it's not impossible at all!"

"It's out of the question," declares Grandfather, showing more anger than I have ever seen in him before. "Think of the scandal — both here, and in America! . . . why, if I gave this mad scheme my countenance, it would not only mean the ruin of my reputation, but perhaps cause a rupture between the relations of France and America! My enemies back home would pounce —" He catches himself, and gets his temper under control with difficulty. "If you think for a moment, young man — that I am going to let a crazy prank of yours tear down the good name I have taken a lifetime to build up, you're very much mistaken! And if you persist in any such mad course — I warn you here and now — I'll go myself to Monsieur Caillot, and His Majesty, and have Madame Caillot put in a convent, and you taken back home in chains, if not left here in some prison!"

This epochal outburst would at any other time

astound me, but so great is my love and determination that I withstand it, white-faced.

"Do what you wish, Grandfather — that is your privilege!" I exclaim, passionately. "But if you refuse to help us, you'll bring down on yourself the very scandal you want to avoid!"

"What are you talking about?" demands the old patriarch, imperiously.

"I mean," I tell him, deliberately, but with feeling, as I draw Blanchette closer in the circle of my arm, "that you simply must help us, somehow — because Blanchette . . ." I hesitate, searching furiously for a delicate expression which would save Blanchette's feelings.

Grandfather, searching our faces, suddenly becomes stone-like, as he stands there, before us. And I rush on, unwittingly picking out the one phrase which cuts him most deeply. . . .

"What I mean," I fumble desperately, "is this . . . that we're just as anxious to keep the Franklin name unspotted as anyone — because, Grandfather — I believe I am soon to have the honour to present you with a great-grandson." I try, with little success, to force a stiff smile. "We're almost certain, sir, that it will be a boy. At least you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that the Franklin name will not die with me."

"The Franklin *name?*" exclaims Grandfather, gulping as if he were choking. "The *Franklin* name . . . ! You dare to taunt me, sir?" He sinks into his chair limply, and in that moment ages so

perceptibly that even in my humiliation and anger I am struck to wonder by the miracle. He stares before him almost vacantly, like a man newly stunned, and as he does so two great tears well up in his old eyes. "By Jehovah, boy — there is no longer any Franklin name!"

All the humiliations and secret shames and passions of a lifetime well up within my throat, and something seems to burst. . . .

"You're right, your excellency!" I burst out in a torrent of bitterness. "I'm not a Franklin — nor was my father — nor shall be my son! We're bastards all!" And on the wake of this explosion follows a hysteria-bred laugh that rings crazily through the room. "The three bastard Franklins . . . how the gods must laugh!" And I sob despite myself. "Laugh — laugh — *laugh!*"

5. "Temple!"

It is Blanchette's frightened cry that brings me to myself. She is gazing at me with horror-filled eyes that are brimming with tears. As I look at her, she grasps my hands, and sinks down weakly in a chair; shaken by silent spasms that wrack me with great shudders, I drop to her side and bury my burning face in her lap. Immediately she begins stroking my hair, and momentarily lays her cool cheek against my head.

"'Twas cruel to have said that," she rebukes Grandfather gently, and even in that moment I wonder how she can possibly pity me when Grandfather

himself is in need of all the pity in the world. "You have both been very cruel to each other, Monsieur . . . it breaks my heart!"

Grandfather's voice — a strange voice I have never heard — comes to my ears.

"We are cruelest to those we love, Blanchette. . . . and we have both been cruel to you, too, my dear. You must forgive us, if you can."

"There is nothing to forgive," says she, simply. "Where one loves there is never anything to forgive."

"It is for me to be forgiven, child, for the sins that are upon me," says he, heavily. "And that by a Power greater than any on earth, before Whose tribunal I am so soon to appear . . . no, my children, the sin is mine — all mine. Yours to forgive, mine to be forgiven!"

I rise, stumblingly, and regard Grandfather. He is so stricken-looking that the tears spring to my eyes; Blanchette, her own full of a divine pity, gives me a meaning little push. I walk over to him, hesitate, and stooping, touch him, tentatively.

"I am sorry, Grandfather . . . profoundly sorry. God alone only knows how much, sir!"

He does not answer, but instead places the palm of his hand on my head as if in blessing, like a patriarch from out of the Book of Books. The remembrance of our so recent conversation with Paul Jones comes to me, fleetingly. *Abraham, Viscount of Mesopotamia,* in Dr. Franklin's own words! Benjamin Franklin, patriarch of the most

modern People of the Book . . . the American Abraham!

His voice comes as from a great distance.

"Blanchette, I will be honest with you, and I want you to be honest with me."

"*Oui, Père Franklin,*" assents Blanchette.

"If you insist upon it," he goes on, in a voice weary and worn, "I shall help you. You shall come to America with us if my name and fame were a thousand times at stake. For the happiness of those I love is dearer to me than aught else on earth — for myself, I care nothing, since my days will soon be numbered."

"*Oui, Père Franklin,*" repeats Blanchette.

"But if you love this boy, you must listen to me. And I, who have seen the world, and know the world, and have lived long in this world, tell you this, and it is true. If you run away with Temple to America, you will ruin your life, utterly. It will be impossible to keep it secret, particularly because of the prominence of all concerned. It will be impossible to keep it unimportant, for it concerns, indirectly, too many. And, above all, it will be impossible for you, particularly, ever to know any peace or happiness, for you will not only be ostracized in our country — which is a provincial and therefore narrow-minded nation — but may even be persecuted, and, what be worse, your children be persecuted after you."

"I care nothing for myself, as long as I can make Temple happy," says Blanchette, very low but clear. "My children must fend for themselves."

"Very well," says Grandfather. "But remember this, Blanchette — and if you search your heart, you will know it to be true. Your taking this mad step will irrevocably destroy any hopes Temple may have for a career."

I spring to my feet.

"I care nothing for a career!" I cry, angrily. "We will go out to the farthermost frontiers of the States, Blanchette and I. We will fight the wilderness with our hands, if necessary, as well as with our hearts. And by the time our children are grown, they will be able to battle their own way, and all this nonsense about us will be forgotten."

Blanchette, however, is silent.

"Fair words," says Dr. Franklin, quietly, "but false. You know Temple as well as I do, Blanchette. You know his taste for luxuries, for refinements, for the amenities of life. You know his impatient, ever-curious intellect. What mental satisfactions will he find in a wilderness exile? How strong will be his armour against the ostracism of those of his kind? How long will he be able to bear the loneliness, the spiritual isolation? — Even with your love beside him?" He shakes his head, sadly. "It's the little things of life that count, Blanchette — you know that as well as I. The little worries, the little pin-pricks — the sharp little regrets for what might have been."

Blanchette is still silent, and I wheel on Grandfather with irritation.

"It does no good, all this talking," I tell him. "I love Blanchette, and I will not give her up. I

don't care if it ruins my life a thousand times — I can't live without her."

"Love, Temple, is sacrifice," says Grandfather, gently. "A trite saying, but a true."

"The truest," speaks up Blanchette, of a sudden, and in her voice is an infinitude of sadness. "My father — for you are that to me, who have none — what you have said is true. How terribly true, I am just beginning to realize." Her hand goes to her heart, and she looks at me with the old half-sad, half-mocking smile I know so well playing about her lips. "Temple — I'm afraid we have been jousting with windmills. Life is too strong for us."

I look at her, amazed.

"Blanchette! What in the world do you mean?"

She is clear-eyed and quite composed. Like a very slim young queen she is, divinely self-assured.

"I mean that I cannot — I will not — go to America with you. And I do not want you to stay here." She turns away, so that I cannot see her face. "Some day you will come back, *mon cher*. And then we shall see — what we shall see. . . ."

I grasp her arm almost roughly, and swing her around so that she faces me. Her eyes are shining with tears, and her lips quivering.

"You are mad!" I cry out. "I will *not* give you up — I cannot give you up!" And as she still shakes her head determinedly — "My God, Blanchette! You cannot mean this seriously! What about — our child?"

She looks at me steadily.

"I wanted to tell you before, Temple, but did not have the opportunity . . . I was mistaken!"

"Mistaken?" incredulously.

She nods, with chin firm, and lips tight.

I think of the Cagliostro pictures. Of the night at the Fair at St. Germain. Of a dozen nights of high ecstasy. I turn pale.

"You are lying," I accuse her, deliberately. "I do not believe you . . . you're just doing this as an absurd sort of sacrifice. I'll not have it!"

"I'm not lying," says Blanchette, and her lips begin to quiver again.

"I say you are!" I exclaim, roughly, beside myself with despair.

For answer she suddenly takes up the tiny jewelled cross that hangs around her neck, lightly touches my lips with it, kisses it herself, then holds it between us. Blanchette looks at me in a breathless, half-frightened sort of way; she draws a deep breath.

"I swear, *mon* Temple," says she, simply. "By the symbol of this faith which separates us, I solemnly swear!" And as I stare at the tiny cross with fascinated eyes — "If ever you should see this in another's hands, my dear, you'll know *then* that I've lied . . . but you never shall, for it was my Sabine's, and will be buried with me when I die." She looks at me bravely, pleadingly. "Do you believe me, now, lover? Say that you believe me. . . ."

I nod my head, stricken.

"Then we had better say *adieu,*" she goes on,

steadily. "Or shall it be *au revoir?* For you are coming back some day, my Temple, to France." And as I gape at her, "Let's say our good-bye now, *mon adoré,* while we both have the courage. Farewells are a doleful affair, at any time — and if I had to say it to you again — later — it would surely break my heart." Her old smile returns, wistfully. "And then, *cher* — you'd hear it crack — as I told you once before, in the far long ago when the moon was young. And it would upset you."

I find my voice, at long last.

"There shall be no good-bye between us, now or ever!" I tell her, with passionate conviction. "I love you, Blanchette — I need you! You're my good angel, my guiding star. Without you I shall end up in perdition!"

"Stars can shine across a sea, *mon cher.* And strong winds can waft across a guardian angel's love. Think of me, Temple — and immediately I shall be with you. For I shall think of you always. And pray for you."

I grasp her two hands and hug them to my heart, and I feel her body shudder. Her hands are ice cold, and her eyes the deep blue of the polar sea. I am turned beggar, like a pilgrim, Mecca-bound, pleading for grace at a shrine.

"Blanchette — Lady-Allah — listen to my prayer! *Don't* do this thing to me . . . I love you."

But she shakes her head, and I realize intuitively when she speaks, that her decision is irrevocable. My heart is turned to stone.

"*C'est fini, mon cher.* Our dream is finished, and my youth. But not yours, dear heart. You must go back to your America and make me proud of you. You must be a great man, like your grandfather — and perhaps, some day, you too will come back to France an 'excellency.' I shall pray for that, and for you, *mon coeur,* by day and by night."

I half raise my arms, beseechingly, my voice tremulous with despair.

"Blanchette — *please!*"

She gives a shuddering sigh as her bosom rises and falls, and turns her head away determinedly.

". . . *C'est fini.*"

6. So I stumble, somehow, to the door, and there, on the threshold, turn for the last time, to look upon this woman I love. She is already in Grandfather's arms cuddled close like a little girl who is afraid of the dark. She is still tearless, however. And they are both watching me. . . . I look back in silence, taking in the tableau made by these two who are all my life.

". . . You will write, Temple?" says Blanchette from set lips. And again wistfully, as I do not answer — "You *will* write, won't you?"

"Oh, my *God!*" I ejaculate, expressionlessly — beyond expression; and close the door on the last remnants of my happiness. Close the door, and lean upon it briefly, before going out of that house. And talk to the dull, dark wood in a low, forsaken voice: "Oh, my God — my God — my *God!*"

CHAPTER THE LAST

Of The End Of The Road And The Magnificent Lie

AND so the pilgrim's trail is nearly done, for the ultimate shrine is reached, and just beyond, at the end of the road, gleams the sea.

It has been a long trail, this — a winding trail, now dipping, now rising — through valleys of despair and mountains of high exaltation. And an adventurous road, this — misty with the mystery of the unknown, and again tonic-clear with the clarity of reality. And all along, at the roadside, have there been shrines, each with its strange goddess to whom tribute must be paid — tribute of kisses or gold, of youth or illusions. And always has there been the next hill to be mounted, and the next bend to be turned. Until, at last, the long-sought shrine has been achieved, and the holy grail of happiness drunk to the dregs.

And with the drinking there has been the quaffing of a rich experience, and the intoxication of a great love. And the elegant pilgrim, having lived his crowded hour to the last ecstatic instant, takes leave of his deity — stripped of his elegance that was youthful illusion, but wealthy beyond all dreams in the coin of memory.

He has starved and he has thirsted, this pilgrim, in the wilderness of his desire. And he has gorged on ambrosia, and guzzled on nectar, in the milk-and-honey domains of the Promised Land. And

now the trail dips for the last time, and he is for the sea. And across the sea, and for the new life that beckons beyond. And all that he has to show for his long trek of faith is a heartful of memories.

Which, after all, is all there is at the end of any trail. . . . There is no more.

2. And so our cavalcade leaves Passy for the last time, and the Hôtel de Valentinois, and the winding Seine. And Grandfather, who is ill and feeble and suffering from the gout and the stone, lies in the litter of Her Majesty the Queen, borne by a pair of royal mules, and advances in the midst of a great company of friends, through the Bois de Boulogne, and away from the Paris he has loved so well, and over whose heart and mind he has reigned so long.

In the Bois great crowds line the roads to cheer and wave farewell, and so it is along all the roads from Passy to St. Germain, and from St. Germain to Mantes; and ever and anon I come on Dr. Franklin weeping, for he knows full well that this is good-bye forever.

And from Mantes to Gaillon our procession travels, ever the object of adulation and sad farewell, and from Gaillon to Rouen. And here, just outside the town, messengers of the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld put us all under mock arrest, and insist on taking us under duress to His Eminence's castle, where we are magnificently entertained.

Thence the royal litter which bears the Apostle of Democracy continues on its last stretch to the seacoast, through the summertime Normandy country. And everywhere the nobility and the ecclesiastics, the soldiery and the peasantry, unite to do him honour.

And so to Havre, on July 22nd, ten days after leaving Paris, and from here our old friends, Le Veillard and his son, accompany us on our two-day trip across the Channel to Southampton; the De Chaumonts having come with us as far as Nanterre, and there said farewell.

And at Southampton, we wait four days for Captain Truxton's ship, the London Packet, which is to call for us. And here at Southampton we find waiting for us our dear friend, B. Vaughan, and the Shipleys — the Bishop of St. Asaph and his daughter Catherine — and many others. And here too, from London, comes my father, William Franklin, to make his peace with Grandfather for the last time. They have pardoned each other, but no longer is there the least bit of affection felt between them. Father makes me a gift of his American lands, and courteously bids us *bon voyage.*

The English Government has ordered that Grandfather's baggage be passed unexamined, and the loading is completed. And now, to spare him the anguish of the last good-byes, the ship sails at five in the morning, while he is still asleep, so that when he rises, land is long out of sight. Only I, alone, am awake to watch the shores of England

disappear. And thereafter my last miserable gaze is for distant France.

3. After our first few days at sea, there is much gaiety aboard, for Captain Truxton has laid in a special store of food and poultry, and punch, porter and claret. There has been a hurricane at the outset of the voyage, during the course of which I was horribly seasick, but now I have my sea-legs again, and am up and about.

There is perfect weather, now, and Grandfather is more sprightly and chipper than he has been in many months. Already he is making preparations to test the temperature of the Gulf Stream, and is writing papers on a new kind of stove and a smokeless chimney. Only I am immune to the spell of weather and sea alike, for I am steeped in an overweening melancholy.

And comes a late afternoon, on the third day out, when I am standing at the taffrail, watching a sunset at sea with lack-lustre eyes. And Grandfather, of a sudden, appears at my side. For a long space we are both silent, and I can feel him studying me covertly; and I call to mind the fact that I have caught him watching me in a most curious way, several times in the past few days.

Now I love my Grandfather Franklin, but the memory of that last scene in his Passy study is still fresh in my mind, and the wound is by no means healed enough for me to speak to him on the old terms of intimacy, for some time to come. It is an

odd feeling, perhaps, but there it is. So, knowing that within his wise old heart he will understand, I turn my back to him — so that he will not see the tears which are suddenly come to my eyes . . . tears which have nothing to do with sunsets, but are born in the limbo of bitter regrets.

To my surprise, he speaks to me, placing an awkwardly affectionate arm about my shoulder as he does so.

"Temple — I have something for you."

I look up in surprise, as much at the odd blending of pity and sympathy in his voice, as at his words, and as I do so, he gently presses a small object into my palm. In that infinitesimal space of time between his words and his action, the last vignette shown in Cagliostro's prophetic mirror comes back to my memory with stunning force. Somewhat awed with a queer feeling of the supernatural, here, I mechanically open my hand and stare into the palm.

There, a pathetic little reminder of the unhappiest moment of my life, I see a tiny jewelled cross. Blanchette's cross . . . the cross of her baby Sabine.

Of a sudden I give a sharp exclamation of pain, as my hand flies to my heart, pressing it hard. . . .

"What's the matter, Temple?" demands Grandfather Franklin, with concern.

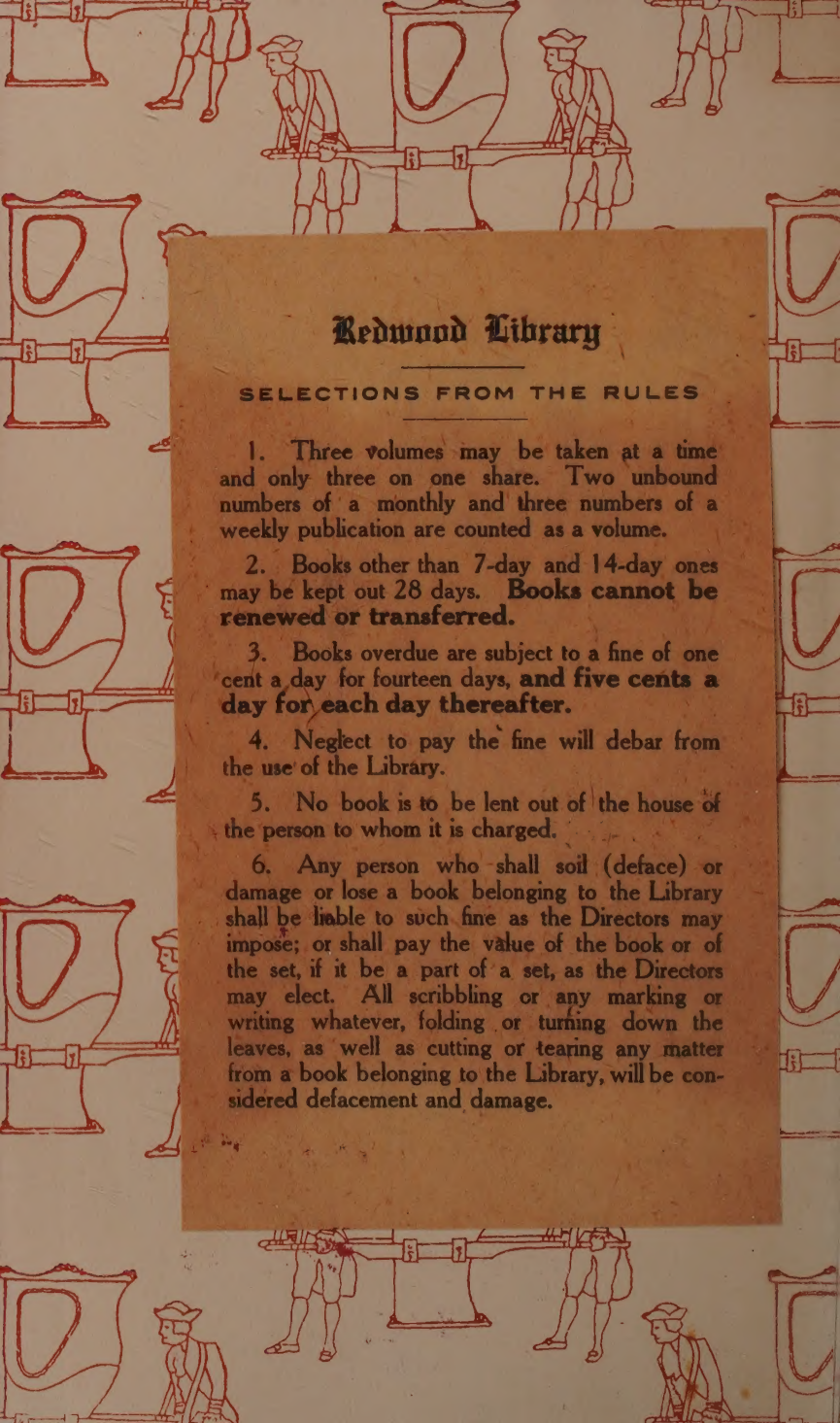
I stare at the setting sun with horror-stricken eyes; but my face is averted, and he does not see.

"Nothing, Grandfather," I answer. "Nothing — at all!"

Which is a lie — but beside that infinitely more magnificent lie which the tiny cross symbolizes — a very poor little lie, indeed . . . and then, what greater futility than to attempt to explain a broken heart?

For it was when I cried out, of course, that I heard it crack.

Rome — New York City
January–June: 1930



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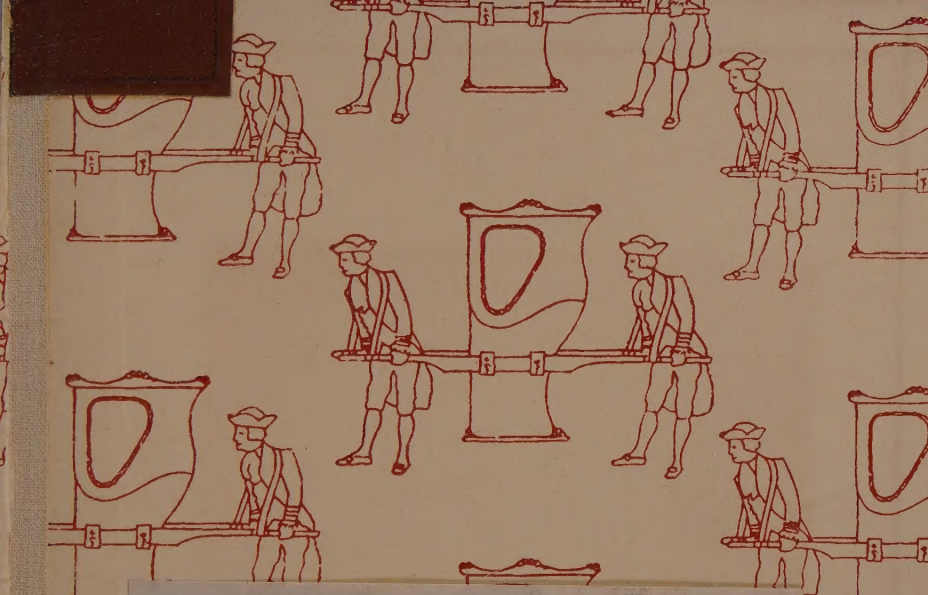

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